

A FORD CROSSES
SOVIET RUSSIA

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BY

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Foreword

WHEN in the winter of 1928-29 I was contemplating an extended visit to the Soviet Union for the following summer and autumn, a Russian friend suggested that I take an automobile with me. My first reaction to this proposal was to brush it aside as utterly fantastic and impracticable. I knew of course that thousands of Americans motor through the countries of western Europe every year, but Soviet Russia seemed to belong to quite a different order of being. I was fearful of the primitive condition of the roads and the general backwardness of the country; and I wondered whether a visitor from the most powerful of the capitalistic nations would be permitted the privilege of taking a car into the first workers' republic. But the more I considered the suggestion the more attractive it became. I was eager to get away from the cities and see the life of the people in all of its phases; I wanted to follow the fortunes of the new social order in remote districts far from the centers of revolutionary propaganda. As a consequence the idea gradually took on the garb of rationality.

There followed a period of doubt and inquiry

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during which I proceeded to examine the feasibility of the project. I talked with Americans who knew the Soviet Union, with Russian visitors in the United States, and with representatives of Amtorg¹ in New York City. The testimony was conflicting. While all agreed that the trip should prove extremely interesting, if practicable, they were far from agreed as to its wisdom. Some thought that it was entirely feasible, while others regarded it as a wild dream. But no one knew; first-hand experience was entirely lacking. Nowhere could I secure accurate information concerning such crucial matters as the condition of the roads, the distribution and price of gasoline, or the availability of garage and repair service.

Many of my American friends, who know nothing of Soviet Russia beyond what they read in the newspapers, thought the project not only impracticable but even fraught with danger. They were sure that, if I should be successful in escaping the bandits, who were supposed to ravage the countryside, I would become a victim of the revolutionary struggle which presumably marks life in the village—I would either fall into the clutches of the Gay-Pay-Oo² or I would be mistaken for a commissar and shot by the kulaks.³ If they had

¹The American branch of the Soviet department of trade.

²The political police.

³The richer peasants.

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known that, as a matter of fact, I would be making the journey at a time when the country, according to the insistent reports of the American press, was about to engage in war with a foreign power, they would have been certain that the undertaking would be full of hazard.

In spite of the uncertainties in the situation, however, I finally decided to take a car with me, if the permit could be secured from the Soviet government. The reasons motivating this decision were several. The practical difficulties did not seem insurmountable. I knew that there were some hard surface roads in Russia and that, while they might be in a condition of disrepair, they would nevertheless in all probability be passable during all kinds of weather in the summer and early autumn. The other roads, which would take me into the more remote and backward areas, I thought could be negotiated on pleasant days. And since I was interested in studying the life of the people and not in making a particular schedule, a short delay caused by rains would be no hardship. The time could be very profitably spent. The possibility of securing gasoline and service on the car was a risk which I was willing to take; and the dangers from bandits, kulaks, and the Gay-Pay-Oo I regarded as fairy tales.

The major consideration, however, was posi-

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are fairly apparent. Being the most widely known and used car in Soviet Russia, I was sure that it could be repaired more easily and quickly than any other. I also argued that the history of the Ford automobile in America suggested that it was unusually well constructed for enduring the hard usage of the Russian roads. Its very low original cost and its economical service were also not overlooked. The closed rather than the open model was selected because of its greater comforts and conveniences. Experience proved the soundness of this argument at every point. The total cost of the car delivered in Leningrad with \$23.57 worth of extra parts was \$661.42. This was but slightly more than the retail price in New York.

The car arrived in Leningrad on July 8. Three days later at three o'clock in the afternoon, having taken the car through the customs and put it in running order, I set out for Moscow and arrived early in the evening of the following day. Since it was then necessary for me to go to Geneva on a short visit I did not resume my travels by automobile in Russia until August. On the tenth of that month I left Moscow for a short trial trip to the east. As it turned out, although the original plan was altered, this journey embraced Nizhni Novgorod, Arzamas, and an

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excursion of perhaps seventy-five or eighty miles into the backward regions beyond.

The twentieth of August found me again in Moscow. With the aid of maps and the counsel of friends I then outlined an extended itinerary through the south. This major and final trip began on the twenty-third of August and ended at midnight on the first of October. The larger centers through which I passed were Tula, Orel, Kursk, Kharkov, Dniepropetrovsk, Dnieprostroy, Melitopol, Ascania Nova, Berdyansk, Mariupol, Stalin, Shterovka, Rostov, Gigant, Krasnodar, Krimskaya, Novorossisk, Tuapse, Yalta, Sevastopol, Odessa, Beerzula, Vinnitsa, Kiev, Gomel, Roslav, Medin, and Moscow. Altogether the car traveled approximately ten thousand kilometers or six thousand miles. This includes a trip by steamer from Novorossisk to Odessa and a trip by train from Beerzula to Kiev. While many parts of the Soviet Union were of course not reached, the journey included certain of the most important areas of the European division.

In view of the widespread belief in America that a visitor to Soviet Russia is always conducted about by a member of the Communist Party, the question of my companions on the journey assumes considerable significance. In the north and

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as far south as Kharkov I was accompanied by various friends connected with the educational institutions of Moscow. From Kharkov to Rostov my companion was a representative of the Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, and from Rostov to Odessa a representative of the Rostov branch of the same society. From Odessa to Moscow I made the trip entirely alone. To be sure, in addition to my regular companions I often gave lifts to pedestrians whom I overtook on the way. Only for one small segment of the trip was I accompanied by a member of the Communist Party. Also I am sure that the agents of the Gay-Pay-Oo did not follow me. There were, however, several occasions when I would have welcomed them gladly.

Beyond a couple of cans with a total capacity of not more than five gallons, which were designed to hold a reserve supply of gasoline and which I used but little on the trip, the car carried no extra equipment. I had one spare tire, two spare tubes, and the kit of tools which ordinarily goes with a Ford car. Some of the tools, however, were missing when I came to the end of my journey. The extra parts ordered from America, some of which I could have used to advantage on various occasions, unfortunately did not reach

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Leningrad until I had left Moscow for the south. My Russian friends warned me against attempting such an extended trip without several spare tires. I ignored this warning and as a result probably would not have reached Moscow without special aid, if the capital city had been seventy-five or a hundred miles further. As it was, two days and a half were consumed in going the last one hundred miles. Although the treads were still good, the tires had apparently lost their resiliency on the rough Russian roads.

My personal equipment for undertaking the trip was not of the best. At the beginning my control of the Russian language was extremely limited and at the end was scarcely adequate to carry on an extended conversation with a stranger. My knowledge of the mechanism of the car was of about the same order. Like the ordinary American university professor I knew how to drive fairly well, but I was quite innocent of any special knowledge about the motor or the dynamo. I was aware of the fact that the car requires gasoline, oil, and water at intervals, and I could locate the carburetor, but that was about the limit of my technical competence for the undertaking. Moreover, the ignorance of my companions even exceeded my own. In fact, certain of their number

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were so innocent of automobile experience that they regarded my knowledge as prodigious. To be sure, I learned much before I reached the last of the six thousand miles, but even on my return to Moscow I could scarcely hold a position as an automobile mechanic. The launching of the enterprise under such conditions, while probably giving little evidence of wisdom, does reveal an extraordinary faith in Mr. Ford and the Russian people. In both instances the faith seems to have been well-founded.

On the whole the entire undertaking proved extraordinarily successful. With the exception of the tires, which were rather well used up by the end of the journey, the car stood the test exceedingly well. There were of course a few accidents on the road; on one occasion shortly after midnight at a distance of about thirty-five miles from the nearest city the car turned over; on another occasion three days of continuous rain on dirt roads made necessary the abandonment of the highway in favor of the railroad; and on two or three occasions the car skidded into inconvenient mud-holes and ditches. At critical points, however, the Ford always showed itself capable of moving ahead under its own power. At the same time the opportunities which the trip afforded of seeing

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life as it is lived under the Soviets far exceeded my anticipations. In the following pages both my observations and my general impressions have been set down as faithfully and honestly as I could record them. For the most part they are derived directly from a journal which I kept from day to day throughout the journey.

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CHAPTER I

Passing the Frontiers

ON the fifth of July I received word in Moscow that the steamer bringing my car would probably reach Leningrad the following day. In order to keep the car out of storage I was advised to be present at the unloading. I consequently left for Leningrad that night with visions of receiving the car the following day and starting back to Moscow the day after. At that time speed was a very important consideration because I had to go to Geneva in another week and I hoped to pass all the formalities affecting the use of the car before leaving Russia. The car had arrived somewhat later than had been expected and I feared that the best months for travel would pass before I could get started. My original plan called for the completion of an important segment of my trip during the first two weeks of July. My anxiety with regard to the

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speedy delivery of the car may therefore be easily understood.

On my arrival in Leningrad early Saturday morning, July 6, I proceeded to the customs house which is located near the docks on the Neva. There I learned that the steamer had been delayed in the Gulf of Finland by a storm and that it might not make port for a couple of days. Impatiently I waited at the Hotel Europe for favorable news, but Sunday passed without word of any kind. On Monday, however, the boat arrived and docked. The officials at the customs house assured me that they would have their men keep a sharp look-out and would notify me as soon as the car was taken off. They were not optimistic, however, because this particular steamer was bringing from America six hundred Fords, as well as many other cars, and the complete unloading would require a week or more. Everything depended on the location of my car on the boat. The following morning, Tuesday, I was again at the customs house and was told that the car had not been seen. I decided, however, to walk out to the docks and take a look myself. After wandering about for some time among boxes and crates I discovered a large case marked with my name and supposedly containing a Ford two-door sedan. It was then about eleven o'clock in the morning

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and I saw myself starting for Moscow in the evening.

I inquired at once about the possibility of having the car put in running order and was told that the docks were equipped to do everything necessary and that I would be able to drive the car to the city. My first thought then was to set qualified workmen to uncrating the car and putting it in shape, but I was advised that before this could be done various papers would have to be signed and tariffs paid. These matters I was certain could be taken care of in half an hour; as a matter of fact they required the rest of the working day which closed at four o'clock. All of this time was consumed in spite of the fact that there seemed to be no great rush of business. Moreover, the vice-director of the customs, a man of real ability and great courtesy, took a personal interest in my case and did what he could to make the clerical wheels revolve more rapidly. His efforts, however, seemed to have but little effect. There were certain things that, according to the rules, had to be done in a certain way, and those who did them could not be hurried. I had encountered similar difficulties in my dealings with the governmental bureaus in Moscow which issue permits for residing in and for leaving the country. Because of the political quality of these latter transactions, I

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was not surprised at delays; but in the organizations engaged in the promotion of commerce I had expected greater efficiency.

Since I gradually came to look for delays of this character in all my dealings with institutions, it may be well to set down what appeared to be the major causes of inefficiency in this initial experience. In the first place, there seemed to be an unnecessary number of documents and papers to be filled in and passed from office to office. One might even venture the suggestion that the present paper shortage in Russia is due to the extraordinary consumption of blanks and receipts in thus retarding the flow of business. That the traders themselves have sensed this is shown by the fact that when you buy goods at a shop you may discover that they have been wrapped in these discarded documents.

In the second place, the office workers seemed to lack skill and experience. In one instance a girl spent almost three-quarters of an hour on a task of calculation that should have required only a few minutes. Some of the formulas which have been derived for the determination of tariff rates are, I know, somewhat complicated, but this fact alone is not sufficient to account for the time consumed. Many members of the clerical force in the Soviet Union today simply are not properly

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qualified for their work. This of course is to be explained in part by the accidents of history. During the most critical period of the revolution an important part of the old clerical force resorted to sabotage. As a consequence an effort has been made to recruit a new staff from the ranks of the manual workers. No doubt in many instances these newcomers have come from a much lower cultural level than the persons whom they have displaced.

In the third place, the entire organization seemed to be unequipped to meet an unfamiliar situation. This may be illustrated by the difficulty which I encountered in paying the customs charges. Among the fees required was a deposit equivalent to one-half the value of the car which was to be held as a guarantee against the possible sale of the car in Russia. My entire bill amounted to approximately five hundred and thirty rubles. In payment I submitted American travelers' checks at the appropriate window. They were refused. The clerk apparently had never seen anything of the kind before. I then visited successively two banks which happened to have branches in the building, thinking of course that I would have no difficulty. To my surprise my checks were again refused, although I was ready to exchange gold dollars for paper rubles at the

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arbitrary rate of approximately one to two fixed by law. As a last resort I asked for the assistance of the vice-director of customs. He accompanied me back to one of the banks and after a long conference, supplemented by telephone calls to down-town banks, I received my rubles. I learned afterward, however, that the successful outcome of the conference was due to the fact that the vice-director had agreed to assume personally whatever risk was involved.

In the fourth place, inco-ordination seemed to mark the relations between the different organizations and the different departments within the same organization which were involved in the transaction. There was inco-ordination between Softorgflot¹ and the customs house, between the office and the docks, and among the workmen at the warehouses. It was extremely difficult to find persons with authority. One instance of this inco-ordination may be cited. Having reconciled myself near the end of the working day on Tuesday with the thought of postponing my departure from Leningrad to the following day, I went to the appropriate office just before closing time and made what I thought were arrangements for the uncrating and setting up of the car Wednesday morning. I signed the necessary documents and

¹The Soviet merchant marine.

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was assured that qualified workmen would begin work at eight o'clock and would probably have the car in order by ten. That evening I returned to the hotel satisfied that before noon of the next day I would be on the road to Moscow. I consequently paid my hotel bill in the morning, secured what information I could regarding the road, and then proceeded to the docks expecting to step into the car and drive away. But to my dismay, although the hour was ten o'clock, matters were precisely as I had left them the evening before. The car was still in its crate, not a stroke of work had been done, and no workmen were in sight. And perhaps the most exasperating aspect of the situation was that I could find no one to share my excitement. The clerk who had filed the order the previous day merely shrugged his shoulders and said that he had done what he could. Obviously there had been inco-ordination somewhere. But let us return to the story of getting the car out of its box.

After much questioning and search I found what appeared to be the center of authority on the wharf. This man told me that the desired workmen would be secured and set to work immediately. I waited half an hour for the workmen to appear, endeavoring in the meantime to develop an interest in what was going on about me.

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I watched the great cranes unloading the boat, I talked with an officer who told me that the following week another steamer would arrive in Leningrad bringing sixteen hundred Fords, and I followed a group of excursionists from the provinces who were being shown through the yards. But still I could see nothing move in my direction. I went to a little building not far away which was supposed to house an office having to do with the direction of labor. After finding the office and registering my complete dissatisfaction, again I was assured that the workmen would be assembled immediately and that everything would be all right. And again I waited, by this time having acquired a degree of resignation. Slowly the workmen began to appear. The first recruit, however, did not impress me. He obviously knew nothing about automobiles and very little about the intricacies of removing crates. Finally, however, a crew of four men, one of whom seemed to have engaged in this sort of undertaking before, were gathered together and at eleven-thirty work began. It was with a feeling of enormous satisfaction and genuine accomplishment that I sat on a neighboring crate and endeavored to superintend operations. I was confident now that the end was in sight and that in an hour or so I would be on my way to Moscow.

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The work of uncrating now went merrily ahead. Even when the men decided to take time out for a little smoke I raised no objection; they had been secured with such great difficulty and consequently seemed so precious that I was quite willing to grant their slightest wish. On one occasion I did call their attention to the upturned nails which had established themselves right under the wheels and suggested that these bits of metal might possibly damage the tires. They assured me, however, that they had uncrated many cars and that my fears were entirely groundless. Among American workers I had never seen such faith in God. And it appeared that the faith of these men was carried a bit too far, because one of the tires flattened out before the work was completed. However, by one-thirty the car was uncrated and set on its wheels. Then to my chagrin but, I must confess, not to my astonishment, I was informed that the workmen had reached the outer limits of their knowledge of automobiles. Moreover, there was no one about the place whose knowledge extended further. Also the facilities for equipping the car to go to the city, which had existed in abundance the day before, now vanished completely. There was neither oil, nor gasoline, nor battery service. Water alone

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could be had, but this was insufficient to move even a Ford out of the yards.

It was now necessary to find some other means of getting the car to a garage in the city eight or ten miles away. By telephone I got in touch with a private taxi owner who agreed to do the job for fifteen rubles. He happened to have no rope, however—a fact which I found to be prophetic of conditions in Russia—but after some argument he promised to purchase the necessary article. He arrived at the docks in half an hour, we adjusted the rope, and by the middle of the afternoon we were on our way through the streets of Leningrad. We attracted much attention, particularly among the younger generation, because the towing of one car by another was a very unaccustomed sight and the closed Ford was something of a novelty. Moreover, the owner of the taxi, desiring to save as much of the fifteen rubles as possible, had bought as thin a rope as he thought would serve. The two cars would consequently part company whenever an unusual strain was placed upon the connecting bond, and my friend in the front car would be apprised of the misfortune by the shouts of youngsters along the street. This, by the way, was the only occasion during its long journey through the Soviet Union on which the Ford was forced to undergo the

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humiliating experience of being towed by another vehicle.

My thought now was to go to a garage, secure a charged battery, have a mechanic connect the wiring, purchase a supply of gas and oil, and start towards Moscow within the hour. Since I was under the guidance of a chauffeur who knew the city, I was certain that these matters would be handled expeditiously. We first went to a state battery service, but since my car was owned by a private individual I was refused assistance. My guide pleaded that I was a foreign visitor to whom special courtesies should be extended, but the workman to whom we talked was obdurate—he could make no exceptions.³ After some consultation we proceeded to another concern where we learned that no extra battery was available and that the charging of my battery would require about a week because the working day was only six hours in length. The case began to look desperate. We entered into another conference, telephoned the director of the Central Bureau of Local Transport, and rang up several garages. We finally decided to go to a certain private garage which had been recommended to us. So once more we drove in tandem along Nevsky

³This was one of the few instances when the argument about being a foreign visitor did not work.

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Prospect and other famous streets of the old capital. Arriving at the appropriate number on the appropriate street we discovered that this garage, like so many garages in Russia, was located in a courtyard accessible by a narrow passageway through the section of the structure abutting on the street. On one side of the enclosure was a shop and scattered about the yard itself were various odds and ends of automobiles and several antiquated machines which still appeared to be functioning. On making inquiry we found that everything needful could be done here. Although the workmen had had no experience with the mechanism of the new Ford, they were confident that they could put the car in running order. They also said that they had a battery which I could use while my battery was being charged. Consequently, although the shadows of evening were beginning to fall, the world at once appeared to take on the brighter hues.

However, when I asked about the charge which would be made for all of these services, I felt that night itself had fallen. The conviction settled upon me, as it had already done on several occasions and as it was destined to do many times in the future before the car was brought safely back to Moscow at the end of its long journey, that I should be classed among the foolish virgins for

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ever attempting to see Russia through the windshield of a Ford. The manager of the garage informed me that they would put the car in order for *one hundred rubles*—a month's wages of a qualified workman. I rebelled with all the power at my command. It looked to me like a case of taking advantage of a supposedly wealthy American capitalist, and I told them so. They assured me on the contrary that they were really giving me an especially favorable rate because I was a foreigner, that if I had been a native son the fee would have been much higher. I then said that before I would pay such an outrageous charge I would either ship the car back to America immediately or sell the car the following day in Lenin-grad to the highest bidder—not knowing then that such a transaction would be impossible under the Soviet laws. The manager replied that I was in a hurry for the car, that the men would have to work all night, and that the job would be extremely difficult because they did not know the car. Taking up the last argument I pointed out that many Fords were arriving in Russia, that a knowledge of the new Ford would consequently soon have great sales value, that I was offering them an opportunity to acquire this knowledge, and that they should therefore be willing to undertake the job freely as a part of their pro-

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fessional training. All of these arguments seemed to have their effect. The manager went into conference with his companions and then reported that they had agreed to halve the fee and put the car in order for fifty rubles. Although such a charge might have seemed exorbitant, if made at the outset, it now took on the semblance of utter reasonableness. Consequently, after being assured that everything would be ready by twelve o'clock the following day, I closed the bargain and with a light heart retired to my hotel for the night to rest and to meditate on the ways of life in the Soviet Union.

The following morning, Thursday, having learned by this time that nothing but delay is certain, I left my baggage in my room and postponed the paying of my bill. Nevertheless I made the necessary arrangements for leaving Leningrad in case the car should actually be ready at the appointed hour. I secured provisions for the trip and gathered what knowledge I could regarding the road. At twelve o'clock my companion and I were at the garage; and, while it was not possible to get into the car and drive away at once, the car was so nearly ready that we may regard the contract as fulfilled to the letter. There remained, however, the task of securing gasoline, oil, and a few other supplies for the car; but this

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part of the story will be told in another place. Here I shall only say that by three o'clock in the afternoon we passed the outer gates of Leningrad and found ourselves on the chaussé leading to Moscow. This initial trip of almost five hundred miles between the two greatest and most celebrated cities of the Union, with the various fortunes and misfortunes of the way, was fascinatingly interesting; but this story also must be told elsewhere.

There is one additional feature of the Leningrad experience which should not be overlooked. I had expected to encounter extended delays in getting a permit to drive to Moscow. I had even imagined that I would be required to fill out numerous blanks, take a driver's examination, and pay various fees before I would be allowed to leave Leningrad. As a matter of fact, all of the formalities involved in this connection consumed less than twenty minutes. I went to the Central Bureau of Local Transport and found there an intelligent, efficient, and courteous man who gave me two documents. One was a sort of automobile passport, a forty-seven-page booklet, in which were set down the number of the motor and various other items descriptive of the car; the other was a typewritten and officially stamped paper giving me the right to drive to Moscow

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without having been examined and without license plates for the automobile. For these documents, moreover, no fees were charged; but when I remarked on the strangeness of the procedure I was told that both the question of formalities and the question of fees would not be overlooked in Moscow. To my regret this prediction proved to be entirely and dishearteningly correct.

On reaching Moscow I had to go at once to Geneva. Consequently the matter of securing a license had to await my return to Russia at the beginning of August.

After my return to Moscow the first thing necessary was to have the car inspected by an official of the Moscow Department of Transport and to have the inspection duly registered in my automobile passport. This involved nothing more than driving the car to the square in front of the appropriate office and waiting a half hour or so with the drivers of six or seven other cars for the appearance of the functionary. It seems that the crucial item in the inspection pertains to the operation of the tail light. According to the law this light must be operated from a separate switch in the rear of the car and not from the switch accessible from the driver's seat. The theory is that under the arrangement characteristic of American practice an unscrupulous driver may in case of

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trouble turn off the tail light while his car is in motion, conceal the number on his license plate, and thus make his escape. A mechanic who had done some service on the car apprised me of this law and put in the switch required to pass the inspection. Immediately thereafter, however, on the grounds that the switch had performed its function he removed it and restored the original connection. This experience, as well as many other experiences which I had in the course of my travels, convinced me that the Russian mechanics generally are ingenious and resourceful men.

The next step in acquiring full rights for the use of the car was the securing of license plates. Although I had driven through the streets of Leningrad and all the way to Moscow without such plates, I was sure that I would feel much safer with them. I received something of a shock, however, when I learned how much these plates would cost me. The charge for registering an automobile is determined by the strength of the motor, the rate being sixteen rubles a year per unit of power. Since my car carried a motor of thirteen such units, according to the Russian system, this meant that the annual rate would be two hundred and eight rubles. At once I began to understand why the taxi drivers in Moscow charge so much for their service. I also was glad

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that I had decided to bring a small car into Russia. But such considerations did not reduce the two hundred and eight rubles—my one great interest at the time. My first relief came when I discovered that I might secure a license for six months at one-half the annual rate; but to one accustomed to the American charges even one hundred and four rubles seemed excessive. I consequently went to the office of the director of the Department of Transport and submitted a plea for clemency. To my surprise my plea reached sympathetic ears and, apparently because I was a foreign visitor with a scientific interest, the license fee was halved again. With a grateful heart I paid the fifty-two rubles plus some minor additional charges which could not be escaped and received my license plates numbered 3281—a number that, because of its great size, attracted attention wherever I went beyond the limits and environs of Moscow.

The final hurdle to be passed was the securing of a license to drive. Although the direct charge for this license was but a single ruble, there were other charges and a number of requirements to be met. The fact that I had driven many thousands of miles in America availed not at all because I had brought no proof with me beyond my own word and the skill that I had acquired. More-

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over, the fact that I had already driven from Leningrad to Moscow was regarded as irrelevant. According to the law there must be examinations, and so there were. In particular my eyes, ears, nose and throat had to be looked into by properly qualified physicians. I found the physicians, answered their questions about my age and place of birth, paid them four rubles and a half altogether, received their certificates of normality, and returned to the Department of Transport. Now came the crucial test. Accompanied by an examiner I drove the car here and there about the city for fifteen or twenty minutes, doing right and left turns and generally mingling with the traffic. The chief subject of conversation during the examination was the comparative merits of the Soviet and American systems of education. And the one admonition that the examiner gave me as we stopped the car in front of his office was that I should sound the horn more frequently. In spite of this warning, however, the weakness, bred of American conditions, remained with me to the end. I could not develop that facility with the signal which is one of the most characteristic attributes of the Russian driver; and I continued to expect pedestrians crossing the street to put aside their newspapers, to interrupt their day-

not surprised when he charged me two rubles for my corner of his room.

On a number of occasions I passed the night in school houses. For traveling teachers thus to utilize the school premises seems to be a common practice in Russia. I would like to recommend the idea to those apostles of efficiency in the United States who advocate the continuous use of the school plant. The character of the accommodations varies of course from community to community. In many places the school is equipped with cots which are devoted to this purpose, while in others the wayfarer must be content to sleep on the floor. In either event, however, he is expected to provide his own blankets. While the service could scarcely be regarded as luxurious, there are compensations. Apparently this privilege of making use of the school building, is extended freely to members of the teaching profession.

The homes of workers, though often crowded, may be very satisfactory. I recall with particular pleasure a new communal home in which I passed the night near Shterovka, where a gigantic electric station was under construction. Since the site selected for this enterprise was far away from population centers, the creation of a new community was necessary. The town has therefore been built according to a plan and there are model workers'

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these lines my right to drive rests quietly in its folder in the office of the Moscow Department of Transport. Since it is earned and paid for, however, and since I long to see what kind of a document it is, I intend to pick it up on some convenient occasion and put it among the souvenirs of my trip by automobile through the Soviet Union.

CHAPTER II

The Quality of the Roads

PERHAPS the greatest uncertainty which I faced in taking the car into the Soviet Union was the condition of the roads. Regarding this question reliable and detailed information was available neither in America nor in Russia. The only point upon which all were agreed was that the roads were bad and that anyone venturing upon them in an automobile would be taking chances. Moreover, the Russians themselves seemed to delight in the evil reputation which their roads enjoy the world over. They even took pleasure in defending the thesis that their highways are the worst on earth. On the other hand, they appeared to believe that every road in America is the last word in excellence. Personally I found the Russian roads better than their reputation, but this does not mean that they are modern in character.

There is one thing that the reader must remember, whether he is passing judgment on the roads or on any other phase of life or culture in Soviet Russia. The European division of the Union taken by itself, the division with which we

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are here concerned, is so huge in extent and so varied in character that generalization is both difficult and dangerous. My own experience, absolutely severely limited but relatively quite extended, tells me that all kinds of roads may be found in Russia and that some areas, such as the Caucasus or the Crimea, which are as large as some countries in the West, are equipped with excellent roads. If the visitor is interested merely in motoring and not in following a prescribed itinerary for scientific purposes, he can find a sufficient number of good roads radiating out from Moscow to enable him to make a very respectable trip. He can go as far northwest as Leningrad, as far north as Yaroslav, as far east as Nizhni Novgorod, as far south as Kharkov, as far southwest as Kiev, and as far west as the Polish border. If he cares to visit the Caucasus or the Crimea, he can spend several weeks motorizing on good roads and under most happy natural surroundings. On the other hand, there are enormous areas through which an automobile can pass with difficulty even under the most favorable weather conditions. This means of course that during the rainy season the roads here are completely closed to motor traffic.

The brightest jewel in the Russian system of roads, and the only road with a hard surface, is

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the chaussé. This road, built by the various tsars of Russia primarily for military purposes, connects many of the principal centers of population and industry north of Kiev and Kharkov. A road of similar quality may be found in the Crimea and the Caucasus. I myself drove over the chaussé from Leningrad to Moscow, from Moscow to Nizhni Novgorod and back, from Moscow to Kharkov, from Kiev to Moscow, and from Krimskaya to Tuapse—altogether perhaps twenty-five hundred miles. At its best it is a truly magnificent road; at its worst it is impassable.

The story is told of Tsar Nicholas I that when he ordered a railroad to be constructed between Leningrad and Moscow engineers asked him for more definite instructions as to where he would have it built. In particular they pointed to the great difficulties which the crossing of swamps would involve. The tsar then called for a map and, taking his pencil, drew a straight line between the two cities. That, he said, was the route which he desired them to follow. And as one drives along the chaussé one often wonders whether similar instructions may not have been given to those engineers who drew the plans for these roads. Ignoring alike the conventions of man and the arrangements of nature, the chaussé strikes across the country towards its objective as

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straight as the flight of an arrow. Neither swamp, nor river, nor hill seems to turn it from its predetermined course. Only to the streets of some city that existed prior to its construction does the road adapt itself. The chaussé from Kiev to Moscow possesses this quality of directness to a peculiar degree. Again and again as the motorist stands on some point of eminence he sees the road stretching out before him as far as the eye can reach.

The road bed of the chaussé with its surface of macadam often reveals the expenditure of an infinite amount of pains and labor. This is particularly true of that section of the Kiev-Moscow chaussé leading from Kiev to Roslav. Here the road cuts great gashes in the hills and ridges, and in the valleys and the lowlands it rests on high broad causeways with a row of trees on either side. In some places, where the right of way passes through swamps and marshy land, these causeways, rising to a height of ten, fifteen, twenty and possibly even thirty feet, unfold for mile upon mile before the astonished eyes of the traveler. And when one realizes that these gigantic works were carried through to completion in the days of serfdom with the most primitive of tools, one can only wonder what these Russians may do if with modern machinery in their hands

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they should turn their attention to the building of roads. The chaussé of course varies greatly in quality from place to place and only rarely reaches the magnificence which I have here described, but everywhere it gives evidence of careful planning and thorough workmanship.

Where the chaussé is kept in good condition it makes an excellent automobile road; and this was its usual condition as I found it. In some places the surface was rather badly worn, but in general it was in a state of good repair. That the chaussé may, however, become very bad and even impassable was made clear to me at a critical point in the journey. The road leading over the Caucasus from Krimskaya to Novorossisk is an old chaussé which apparently has received no attention from the transportation authorities since the outbreak of the World War. As a consequence, through the combined action of rain and frost and the wheels of telegas,¹ the hard surface has been badly shattered. In the more difficult and precipitous sections of the road the old surface has lost all semblance of smoothness and regularity. Great cavities, often a foot and a half in depth and made the more dangerous by the unyielding quality of their edges, test both the power and the mechanism of the car at every turn of the wheel.

¹Peasant wagons.

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And the fact that for the most part the road, as it winds its way through narrow mountain passes, is left unguarded on its outer side adds to the thrills of motoring. On reaching Novorossisk we were asked by a mechanic, of whom we inquired the way to the gasoline station, by what road we had come. When we replied that we had come over the mountain from Krimskaya he doubted our word. In a journey of six thousand miles one short trip of twelve miles of this character is sufficient for both the car and the driver. As we were passing over the worst part of the road I continually expected the springs to snap; but, in spite of the severity of the strain, they brought us safely to the shores of the Black Sea.

In concluding this account of the chaussé a word should be said about its total setting. Here of course I am referring to the true chaussé of the north and not to its counterpart in the Caucasus and the Crimea. The most careless and insensitive observer, as he proceeds along the chaussé by automobile, must experience a profound feeling of incongruity. He must wonder whether this magnificent highway was not constructed for some society that has either passed away or remains to be born, for it seems to be out of place in the actual world of today. Neither the retinues of feudalism nor the heavy traffic of industrialism

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greet the eye of the traveler. On some sections of the chaussé the motorist may drive for an hour without passing a single vehicle of any description, while elsewhere he will see only peasants and telegas and herds of cattle. For mile upon mile the road may be covered from side to side with a thin carpet of grass and weeds that in some fashion have been able to take root in the sand-filled crevices among the stones. Moreover, where the peasants use the chaussé they very commonly, at least during the dry season, avoid the hard center of macadam and make their way along the softer shoulders of the road. And in many instances, though following the course of the chaussé, they have fashioned their own highways in the fields on either side. Obviously this highway was not made for the peasant. And neither was it made for the satisfaction of any impulse that agitates contemporary Russia. Nevertheless the new social order which is rapidly taking form will find it a valuable heritage from an alien past.

The great majority of the highways of Soviet Russia are of course dirt roads. Indeed vast areas are accessible today by no other means. If the traveler desires to go beyond Yaroslav in the north, Nizhni Novgorod in the east, or Kiev and Kharkov in the south, he must content himself

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with dirt roads. From the standpoint of the motorist, however, these highways may be divided into three classes. There are the improved roads, the so-called *big roads*, and the ordinary roads which lead from village to village. Naturally they are all greatly subject to weather conditions.

The improved road is a very recent innovation and is an ordinary dirt road on which work is regularly done, as in America. It would seem that this practice of grading the road has been introduced from the United States, because such a highway is often called Americanka. I found one such road in excellent condition leading to Nizhni Novgorod along the Volga River. Also a very important part of the highway from Rostov to Gigant² is of this type. And the roads on Gigant itself which must embrace more than a hundred miles are graded after the American pattern. Moreover, here I saw grading machinery like that used in the United States at work in the building of highways. From the standpoint of the motorist the improved road, when in good condition and weather is favorable, is one of the best roads in Russia. It is usually well laid out and its surface during the dry season is hard and smooth. This type of road, however, is very rarely encountered.

²A great state farm on the Caucasian steppe.

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Perhaps the greatest fraud among the highways of the Soviet Union is the so-called *big road*. Possibly because the name of this road is so much more impressive in the Russian than in the English language, before I had actually seen it I was sure that I could go wherever it led. Indeed, since its representation on the map differed but little from that of the chaussé, I was certain that it would be practically as good as the hard road. My disillusionment came very early in my journey, as I traveled from Nizhni Novgorod to Arzamas. Although this highway was probably a rather unfortunate sample of the *big road*, I shall describe it as I found it on the fourteenth of August, 1929.

At eight-thirty on the morning of this particular day our party started for Arzamas. Since, according to the maps and the statements of chauffeurs, the distance was no more than sixty miles, we expected to go to Arzamas, make our observations, and return to Nizhni Novgorod the same day. This seemed entirely feasible because we were assured that we would have the *big road* most of the way, and I was still under the spell of the grandiose Russian name for the highway. And as we turned into the *big road* not far from Nizhni the spell remained unbroken. I saw before me a highway that in certain respects was not unlike the chaussé. It had the same directness of

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line and the same breadth of way. Moreover, it was flanked on either side by a row of trees. On entering this road, so brilliant seemed the prospect, I had no doubts about the possibility of reaching Arzamas in a couple of hours. But the external appearance belied the real quality of the road. It always disappointed; it always looked so much better at a distance than at hand. The traveler is therefore constantly lured onward by the mirage of a better road just ahead which ever melts away into the harsh reality of deep ruts left by the wheels of telegas. Consequently, as we drove into Arzamas under the rays of the setting sun, after having driven less than ninety miles according to the meter of the car, we wondered whether we would ever see Nizhni Novgorod again.

But the *big road* as I saw it in this first instance should be described in more detail. It was laid out on a grand scale by, so I was told, Catherine the Great. In several places I measured it and found it to be fifty English yards in width. It is so wide that I kept wondering why the peasants failed to confiscate it at the time of the revolution. A statistician should be set to the task of calculating the amount of good land which is kept out of use in Russia by this extravagance in the making of roads. And apparently the same

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thought has occurred to the exceptionally bold and enterprising peasant, because here and there the road has actually been brought under cultivation. It is of course a bit disconcerting to the traveler to have the *big road* end in a patch of potatoes; yet it is about as easy to pass by automobile when cultivated as in its natural and untamed state. Certainly the Five-Year Plan⁸ should provide for the partial liquidation of this overgrown highway. I would recommend that one-third of it, taken from the less fertile side, be converted into a modern road and that the remainder be turned to the uses of agriculture. Such a disposition of the land would give a highway of ample and even generous proportions and at the same time would provide an opportunity for organizing a sovhoz⁹ along new and, I think, even revolutionary lines.

This last point merits elaboration. Let us consider for the moment some of the advantages which might be expected to flow from an agricultural experiment of this type. If the undertaking were confined to the road between Nizhni Novgorod and Arzamas, a sovhoz could be organized with approximately five hundred hectares of land, if my calculation is correct. In case this

⁸A gigantic program of construction embracing the five-year period from October 1, 1928 to October 1, 1933.

⁹A state farm.

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should prove too small an area to insure the economies of large scale production, either the project might be extended to embrace other segments of the *big road* or an additional strip of land of the appropriate width and adjacent to the highway might be purchased from the peasants. Personally I am inclined to favor the second of these proposals because there are certain operations that in all probability could not be conducted economically on a farm with a breadth of only one hundred feet. But let us add another hundred feet or, if we wish, even a thousand feet. This is a mere detail which affects in no way the soundness of the plan. The main point is that we have a sovhoz reaching from Nizhni Novgorod to Arzamas. The workmen could have the advantages of both city and rural life. They could live in either the one city or the other and yet spend the working day in the open air of the country. They might even shift their residence from week to week, or month to month, and thus relieve the tedium of existence. Moreover, agriculture might be combined with trade in such a way as to work the most extraordinary economies. The tractorist, for example, might at the same time plough the field and serve as a medium of transportation and communication between important centers of population. The thoughtful reader will no doubt think

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of many other possibilities in the situation, but I must be content to direct attention to what I regard as its greatest virtue. Consider the educational and propaganda value of a sovhoz employing the most modern methods and machinery extending for ninety miles along a busy road. The great weakness in the present organization of sovhozes is found in the fact that they are secluded and remote from the public gaze. Take the celebrated Gigant as an example. It is a truly challenging enterprise but it is so far away that most people regard it as a myth. In comparison what an object lesson in the improvement of the agricultural economy would be a sovhoz of the type here outlined! Undoubtedly it should be incorporated into the Five-Year Plan.

The chief indictment, however, which the traveler launches against the *big road*, as it manifests itself north of Moscow, is not its breadth. The fact that more than eight hours of driving time were consumed in going from Nizhni Novgorod to Arzamas—a distance of less than ninety miles—suggests that there was something fundamentally wrong with the surface of the road. And there was. In so far as I could see, except for the clearing of the way through an occasional forest and the construction and repair of bridges, the highway remained from year to year as fashioned

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by the hand of nature and carved by the wheels of the wagons of peasants. In many places the entire expanse of fifty yards between the rows of trees, which marked the limits of the official road, was cut by deep and irregular ruts made by telegas during the rainy season. Apparently in using the highway the peasants, or perhaps the peasants' horses, had followed their diverse inclinations. They would pursue one course until the way became impassable and then some enterprising individual, man or horse, would strike out in a new direction looking for a smoother or more solid surface. As a result the road actually in use would often be forced out into the fields beyond the boundaries of the original highway. Moreover, quite commonly the way was so covered with a thick growth of grass and weeds that these ruts were effectually concealed. Under these conditions it was practically impossible to steer an even course between danger spots. Sooner or later the wheels on one side of the car would drop into one of these hidden channels and then in a moment, because of the irregular convergence and divergence of the ruts, a point would be reached where the wheels on the other side of the car would be forced into a companion channel. And now, since these two channels, holding the wheels as in a vice, would maintain a parallel relationship for only a

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brief interval, the entire framework of the car would often be placed under an enormous strain. We were fortunate enough to keep out of the deeper ruts from which it would have been impossible to extricate ourselves without help.

The third and most numerous type of dirt road is the ordinary village road. It is never found on the maps and is merely the connecting link between two villages. To be sure, by frequency of use a series of these roads may be bound together into a unit and thus be shaped into a highway of a somewhat more ambitious character. But the village road, because it is never worked and because it lacks official sanction, may change its course from time to time. Naturally wherever bridges are constructed, forests felled, or other fairly lasting improvements made, the road may be given a degree of permanence. At least these points or segments will be fairly constant elements in the highway. For the most part, however, the village road seems to represent an unplanned response to the logic of topography, often striking directly across cultivated fields, avoiding natural obstacles, and seeking out the easier grades and firmer ground. Its quality at a given moment seems to be a function of the nature of the soil, the condition of the weather, and the extent of the traffic. As I have seen it, the village road ranges all the way from

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excellent to impassable. Even at its best, however, it is quite unsatisfactory because of its very frequent change of direction and the impossibility of knowing what may be just around the next turn.

If one motors in the Soviet Union during the dry season and if one is bold enough to venture beyond the chaussé, one cannot fail to be impressed by the way in which the presence or absence of dust may affect the outlook on life. Particularly is this true of that enormous region lying between Kiev and Kharkov on the one side and the Black Sea and the Caucasus Mountains on the other. Here during the month of August and early September, if not at certain other times of the year, dust reigns supreme. Everything, including dwellings, vegetation, and people, seems to be covered with it; and as one motors over a road on which the dust is several inches deep one sees the world itself through a cloud of dust. It rises in great billows after the car; and the rear window becomes darkened, as if the shade were drawn, by a layer of dust which has accumulated on the outside of the glass. In spite of all efforts to keep it out, it comes up through the floor, stifling the occupants of the car and settling on the baggage and upholstery. And an automobile raises such an enormous quantity of dust that the highway may become completely obscured for a great distance

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roundabout. I recall overtaking a truck between Dniepropetrovsk and Dnieperstroy which I was able to pass only by leaving the road altogether and circling about the truck on the steppe at a distance of fifty yards. When I first endeavored to pass it on the road I found myself so completely blinded by dust that I did not dare proceed. Under these conditions the traveler begins to wonder whether there is a world somewhere in which the air is pure and sweet and free from dust. He also finds himself praying for rain.

In time of course the dry season rolls by and the rains begin to fall. Then the motorist thinks longingly of those delightful dusty roads which now appear as a happy memory, and he curses himself for ever having prayed for that demon rain which destroys the highway in its very foundations. I encountered rain for the first time on the way to Rostov from the Don Basin on the eighth of September. This, however, amounted to nothing because the road had been so very dry. At Gigant I had a taste of what the Russian roads might be like if subjected to a steady rain, but with the aid of ropes on the rear wheels the car was able to reach dry territory. Between Rostov and the Caucasus Mountains I also experienced some of the effects of rain. But these first rains were local and spasmodic in character. It was only when I left

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Odessa for Kiev on the 24th of September that I came face to face with the real thing. Rain had been falling at intervals for three days in Odessa, but I hoped that the area of precipitation was confined to the borders of the Black Sea and that before going far I would find dry roads again. Events proved that truth lay in precisely the opposite direction. The further I proceeded the worse the roads became. With ropes on the wheels the car pounded onward through mud, water, and rain during the entire day and by nightfall succeeded in reaching the little town of Beerzula, something less than 120 miles from Odessa. During the last eight or ten miles the automobile was forced into second speed continuously; and the ropes gave out almost at the moment the wheels struck the mud-covered cobblestones of the streets of the town.

Here in Beerzula I came to a poignant realization of the misery and dreariness which mud can bring into life. There was mud everywhere—on the streets, on the sidewalks, on the floors of shops and dwellings. There was no way of escape. It even seemed to permeate your very soul and to cast its melancholy shadow over the whole of existence. Moreover, the rain continued to fall, and the breath of autumn chilled the wind. I swore that if I ever reached hard surface roads again I

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would never leave them. And I meditated on the narrowness of life lived amid such surroundings. But then it occurred to me that even Beerzula must have its sunny days and pleasant seasons. Furthermore, the inhabitants, having been accustomed from their earliest years to the autumn rains and mud, no doubt accept these phenomena and the traditional adjustments to them as a part of the order of nature. For all I know they may even long for the coming of the mud and derive genuine pleasure from trudging about in it and even tracking it into their houses. As I looked at them, however, they seemed to be as miserable as I was. The difference lay in the fact that they knew no other world to which they might go. How I longed for something dry to set my foot upon or a warm corner in which to rest! Consequently when I realized that the car could not make its way over the roads as they then were, when I was told that they would get much worse before getting better, and when I learned that they would not get better before the following summer, I put the car on a freight train and thus reached Kiev and the chaussé leading to Moscow.

In any system of roads the condition of the bridges is a question of central importance. Indeed there is perhaps no better measure of the state of the highways of a country. During the first days of

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my journey I consequently made frequent inquiry regarding the bridges, but as the days wore on this thought gradually dropped out of my mind. Only once during the entire trip were my movements hampered at all by the inadequacy of the provisions for crossing streams. Scores of bridges were under repair, but in every instance except one a temporary structure of ample strength for heavy traffic had been provided. At several points bridges were entirely absent where they might have been useful, but here I found by the method of trial and error that they were not essential. Between Slavyanskaya and Krimskaya I crossed the Kuban by ferry. Thus the condition of the bridges added but little to my adventures.

The roads of Soviet Russia today are the roads of a simple rural civilization which for centuries was ruled by a relatively unenlightened feudal aristocracy. Such a civilization had little need for an elaborate system of roads, because there was no desire to raise the cultural level of the masses and develop a highly integrated society of the modern type. Each little community, because of the simplicity of its life and the primitive nature of its wants, was largely self-sufficient. Consequently, without any sense of privation and with its aspirations smothered in ignorance, it lived a life of profound isolation. Thus the village road,

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local in its purpose, unplanned in its course, and unimproved in its quality, but reflects the world of the peasant. Cutting across this road and apparently belonging to another order of creation is the *chaussé*. Obviously here is a highway which was built to satisfy the wishes of the monarch and presumably to promote the safety of the realm. In the Crimea and the Caucasus, the playgrounds of the old aristocracy, yet another motive no doubt entered into the construction of excellent highways. With the coming of the new social order, however, we may expect to witness the building of an altogether new system of roads.

The construction of this new system of roads should not be difficult. The topography of the country makes road building relatively easy. While the terrain is less flat than the foreigner is led to believe who gathers his knowledge wholly from an examination of the maps of Russia, it is relatively free from those great inequalities in the surface which make the building of highways so difficult and costly in other lands. Moreover, in the *chaussé* and the *big road*, with all of their limitations, the foundations of an excellent road system already exist. Both types of highways are well conceived and they both represent the expenditure of an enormous amount of labor. With modern road-building machinery they could

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quickly be made to serve as the great central arteries of an elaborate system of roads. To be sure, because of the inadequacy of their number and extent, they require very great supplementation. Up to the present time the new government has been able to do little more than keep up the roads bequeathed to it by the old order. But already new projects are being launched and careful experiments, designed to discover the type of surface best adapted to the weather conditions of Russia, are being conducted. And the Five-Year Plan calls for the construction of thousands of miles of new road. Consequently, the foreign motorist, who desires to encounter the conditions which I have described in this volume, should not postpone his journey to the distant future.

CHAPTER III

Finding the Way

BEFORE leaving America I was assured that, even if the roads were found to be passable, my situation would be but little improved because of the difficulty of finding the way. All with whom I talked, Americans and Russians alike, agreed that there would be no road signs and that the maps, if they existed at all, would be totally inadequate. And a friend in New York who had motored short distances out of the cities in the south to see village life told me that the natives themselves after passing beyond the familiar landmarks had great difficulty in finding their way home over the monotonous steppe. The thought of being lost somewhere in the Russian wilderness among people who knew nothing of the outside world constantly recurred to me, therefore, as a possibility. I recalled how Hop o' My Thumb had dropped pebbles along the path when his parents had endeavored to lose him and his brothers in the forest, and I wondered if some such device might not prove useful to me. The reality, however, though often disconcerting and

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at times a bit exciting, turned out to be much more prosaic than the anticipation. The reasons for this were several.

In the first place, after once finding a chaussé a blind man could not lose his way. Maps and road signs are entirely superfluous. As we have already seen, the chaussé is so rare, so direct in its course, so unlike the other roads of Russia, so clearly and unmistakably marked by its very nature, that the motorist is never in doubt as to how to proceed until the highway loses itself among the streets of some fairly large city. Here of course he may face real difficulties, but having emerged from the city he again feels the confidence of certainty. Rarely does the chaussé fork, and, when it does, if the traveler possesses the slightest sense of direction, he cannot fail to choose the correct branch. The *big road* also, if well laid out, is easily followed. But if the motorist ventures beyond the chaussé and the *big road*, he will feel the need of positive guidance, because he will find himself in a veritable maze of roads which look much alike and which often appear to lead nowhere.

In the second place, maps of Soviet Russia exist in great abundance. There are large maps and small maps and maps designed to show the location of practically everything within the Union which has the attribute of position. The making

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and distribution of maps constitute a recognized part of the educational program; through them a continuous effort is being made to enlighten the population regarding the size, the climate, the resources, the products, and the needs of the country. Thus for practically every subject of interest both general and detail maps have been prepared. The road maps seem to go about as far as the roads themselves go. In other words, they include the chaussés, the *big roads*, and any other roads that have either permanence or official sanction. I carried nine maps—one general map of the European division of the Union and eight detail maps which embraced all of the sections through which I expected to travel. The general map indicated the positions of the more important centers and the chief arteries of trade and travel; the detail maps, besides giving the facts of topography, showed cities, towns, and large villages, all highways except the village roads, and even the distances between points in kilometers. These maps by themselves of course were not entirely adequate. It was necessary to use many roads that were not represented even on the detail maps, and the best of maps could tell nothing regarding the condition of any road. As a consequence, although the maps were very helpful, reliance had to be

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placed constantly on other sources of information and guidance.

In the third place, road signs are not entirely lacking in Soviet Russia. On the chaussé there are kilometer posts which give the distance to important points. Very commonly three facts are given on each post—first, the distance to the last city passed; second, the distance to some really important center such as the capital of a republic; and third, the distance to the next city. Thus on the road to Moscow between Yukhnov and Medin the traveler will see marked on every post the distance to Yukhnov, the distance to Moscow, and the distance to Medin. On the *big road* likewise kilometer posts may often be seen. Moreover, at crossroads there are occasional signs pointing the way to the different cities or towns to which the several roads lead. All of these signs, however, are of relatively little value to the motorist because they are found where they are least needed. The chaussés and *big roads* are clearly marked by other means, as we have seen. The traveler wants signs when he is in doubt, and he is commonly in doubt on the village roads. Here there are no signs, and the maps often do not help him. The only remaining source of guidance is the inhabitants of the region.

In supplementing maps and road signs our

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party followed a simple procedure. Before starting on a trip of any kind from an important population center we sought out those persons who in all likelihood would possess the most detailed and reliable information. As a rule the persons consulted were chauffeurs or others associated in some way with automobiles or highways. The most competent individual, however, was often very difficult to locate. Occasionally we would drive clear across the city to interview someone who was reputed to have the knowledge desired. Having at last discovered the road expert we would first endeavor to trace out the suggested route on the map. If this should prove unsatisfactory, as it often did because of the absence of critical points on the map, we would then take down in writing the names of the villages through which we should pass. Sometimes our adviser would even go so far as to draw a rough sketch of the course to be followed.

Having secured the necessary information from the most reliable sources available we would then proceed on our way. According to our experience, however, this information always proved inadequate, because it was always incomplete. Inevitably there would be unanticipated forks in the road and villages that had not been mentioned. We consequently had to supplement our initial

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and general inquiry by questioning people continually along the way. Thus on finding the road branching in the middle of a field we would sometimes await the approach of a peasant or seek the help of a ploughman. Not infrequently such a procedure was rendered difficult by the behavior of the village horses in the presence of an automobile. The person whom we wanted to interview would often strive to evade us by circling out across the fields. In regions below Arzamas, where automobiles had never before penetrated, I have even seen children fourteen, fifteen and sixteen years of age scatter at the approach of the car like frightened rabbits. On reaching the first village on our route we would of course inquire the way to the second; on reaching the second, the way to the third, and so on. Where the road was particularly hard to find we would sometimes prevail upon a youngster to accompany us; and occasionally we would pick up a pedestrian who happened to be going our way. So by various methods we secured the guidance essential to the journey.

In some respects the reliability of this information left much to be desired. As a general rule, advice concerning the way itself was fairly accurate, although we found from experience that it was unwise to trust the statement of a single person. The Russians, like other people, commonly

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endeavor to be agreeable; and this tendency often takes the form of confirming the error of the inquirer. The ignorance regarding roads, moreover, was quite extraordinary; in view of the unintegrated character of Russian civilization, however, this was entirely intelligible. Occasionally we would find peasants who did not even know the way to the next village four or five miles distant. We discovered further that the knowledge of the inhabitants sometimes assumed unexpected forms. On the chaussé a short distance from Leningrad we approached a person who was unable to tell us whether the road led to Chudova, the next city on the route, but who did know that it went to Moscow.

Only very rarely, except in the cities, did we lose our way. In Russia, as in America, it was particularly difficult to get out of the great population centers. But once on the right road the task of keeping it was fairly easy. There were of course many exceptions. On our way to Arzamas we inadvertently took the wrong road greatly to our advantage, so at least we were told later by the peasants. They said that the road we had intended to follow was impassable. Whether this was truth or fiction, I have no means of knowing. Below Dnieperstroy we were forced to retrace our steps because a guide who happened to be accompanying

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us at the time was unfamiliar with the route. Between Rostov and Krasnodar we went some twenty miles out of the way because a town had recently changed its name. The present fashion in the Soviet Union of giving revolutionary names to streets, towns, and cities often adds to the uncertainties of travel. As a consequence the maps and the inhabitants may both be out-of-date.

Information regarding the condition of the road was extremely unreliable and conflicting. Roads which we were told on competent authority were excellent often proved to be all but impassable, and roads which we were warned to avoid sometimes turned out to be excellent. We even discovered very good roads where according to confident assertion there were no roads at all. That under these conditions disagreements should arise among the informers is of course only natural. A few illustrations will give some idea of the uncertainties introduced into motoring by these opposed and unreliable reports on the condition of the highways.

My first experience of this kind has already been recounted in part. I refer to the road from Nizhni Novgorod to Arzamas. We were told before setting out that the highway was very good and that we could drive at the rate of twenty-five, thirty, or even thirty-five miles per hour. As a

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matter of fact our average was less than twelve, and the unevenness of the road forced the car into first and second speeds during a large part of the distance. Our flagging spirits were kept alive by the encouragement of the peasants who always promised better roads just ahead. Although the better roads never materialized, the reports, being given at a time when I was yet trustful of the spoken word, always kindled new hope in my breast. Whether we could have kept going without this artificial stimulation, I am not certain. The experience, however, taught me that falsehood, if administered under the right conditions, has its place in the economy of things.

A word should perhaps be said about the human weakness, which manifested itself so often among our advisors, of giving out exaggerated statements regarding the speed which the car could make on a given highway. Often when I was told that on a certain road I could go as fast as forty, fifty, or even sixty miles per hour, I counted myself lucky if I averaged twenty. This discrepancy was due partly to the fact that Russian chauffeurs are great lovers of speed and as a consequence strive to get every mile out of the car that the road will allow, even to the discomfort of the passengers and injury to the mechanism. A drive with a Russian chauffeur over Russian roads

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is therefore one of the most vigorous forms of exercise. Then too an informer is inclined to center his attention on some little segment of a road where the higher speeds are possible and thus leave the impression that the entire road is good. But I am convinced that in many instances people talk glibly about forty or fifty or sixty miles per hour who know nothing about cars beyond what they have read in the newspapers. I recall giving a ride to a man who had told me that the road a little farther on would permit me to go forty and forty-five miles an hour. He became visibly alarmed, however, when I reached the terrific speed of fifteen miles and at eighteen he was ready to get out. His knowledge of speeds was obviously entirely theoretical.

Another instance of gross misinformation pertained to the road from Mariupol to Stalin. My misgivings about this particular highway originated in America from the reports of friends who had visited the Don Basin. And these misgivings, fed by uncertainty and conflicting testimony, grew until by the time I reached Mariupol they had taken on the form of a complex. A man in Berdyansk, from whom I made inquiry and who spoke with authority, gave a most doleful shake of his head and said that the road was practically impassable. By way of confirmation and elucida-

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tion he added that he had passed over it recently and that he had found the hills particularly dangerous because the road had been badly washed in places. One hundred yards farther on in the same city I approached a second man who spoke with the same tone of conviction and who maintained that the road was excellent. As a matter of fact it was neither very bad nor yet very good—just an ordinary dirt road with an ample covering of dust in places. And to my surprise I saw no hills at all until I actually reached the neighborhood of Stalin.

The character of the road from Krimskaya to Novorossisk I have already described. It remains to say something of the information which was given me regarding this highway. Until I reached Krimskaya itself I labored under the delusion that it was in perfect condition. In Moscow I was assured that this particular road was good, apparently for no other reason than because it led over the Caucasus Mountains. There is a legend in Russia that all roads in this area are excellent, and when on my return to Moscow I reported to friends that I had found certain highways badly worn which were reputed to be good they remained unconvinced. Even in Krasnodar, less than sixty miles away, the notion prevailed that, while the road from there to Krimskaya was in bad con-

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dition, the highway from this point on to Novorossisk was good. My advisers consequently planned a roundabout route to Krimskaya which followed the north bank of the Kuban as far as Slavyanskaya. It was not until I reached the streets of Krimskaya and by chance inquired the way of an inspector of roads that I gained an inkling of what was immediately ahead. When I asked him about the road over the mountains he smiled and said it could be passed. Thus the worst bit of road which I encountered in Soviet Russia had an evil reputation only in its own neighborhood.

I shall give one final instance of inaccurate reporting—the most incredible of all. From Rostov to Odessa I could secure no reliable information regarding the road from Kiev to Moscow. According to the maps it was a chaussé; and I argued that it must be good because of the importance of the cities at the terminal points. But, although I made inquiry of everybody who might by any chance be informed, I could find no one who possessed any first-hand knowledge. The question was crucial because my return to Moscow by automobile depended upon the answer. I thought that by some lucky chance I might succeed in reaching Kiev over dirt roads, but I was sure that it would be asking too much of fate even to hope for weather conditions which would permit me to go

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on to Moscow without the help of a hard surface road. At Beerzula I was told that the chaussé from Kiev to Moscow could not be depended upon and was advised to ship the car all the way by train. Before I had left the freight yards at Kiev a man who claimed to be a chauffeur said that the road to Moscow was in terrible condition but that I might be able to pass. A half hour later another chauffeur assured me that the road was excellent. I received other reports, but felt no certainty regarding the matter until I actually started for Moscow early on the morning of the twenty-eighth of September. Imagine my astonishment and relief on seeing unfold before me all that day a truly magnificent highway—easily the best that I had seen in the Soviet Union.

I have often asked myself why there should be such profound disagreement regarding the condition of the road. One reason no doubt is to be found in differences in standards. What seems good to one may seem mediocre or inferior to another. Thus the judgment of a peasant is likely to be utterly worthless, because he thinks in terms of the telega rather than the automobile. A telega, needless to say, is made to endure the worst of roads. Another and more important reason is lack of knowledge on the part of those who volunteer information. There is so little motoring in Russia

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that the genuinely informed person is rare indeed. The inquirer consequently is not likely to find him. Then the roads are always changing. A dirt road may be excellent today and bad tomorrow. Even a chaussé may undergo change. One must therefore not only ask the informant whether he has traversed the road about which he speaks, but also whether he has traversed it recently. In Kiev a man who was telling me about the chaussé to Moscow assured me that he had been over the road himself, but when pressed for dates he admitted that it was in 1920.

Information regarding distances is also very unreliable. Since the question of distance, however, is a matter of relatively little importance and can ordinarily be checked on the map, I shall content myself with the reporting of only the most striking instances. In Nizhni Novgorod, as we have seen, the distance to Arzamas was said to be but sixty miles, whereas the meter of the car registered almost ninety. At a little town thirty-five miles north of Kursk I asked a number of citizens the distance to Kharkov. The guesses ranged all the way from forty-five to three hundred miles, and every informant spoke with conviction. According to our meter the distance was about one hundred miles. In Kiev the estimates of chauffeurs regarding the distance to Moscow varied all the

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way from 480 to 720 miles. These illustrations, as well as many others that might be given, reveal the narrow geographical limits within which the population lives.

A closely related incident worth reciting was the search for the Mardva, a supposedly primitive people with Finnish affiliations occupying certain territories to the south of Nizhni Novgorod. My desire to see representatives of this people, by the way, was responsible for the ill-fated trip to Arzamas and regions beyond. While visiting an historical museum in Nizhni, I was shown certain elements of their material culture. Upon making inquiry I was told that there were numerous settlements of the Mardva in the neighborhood of Arzamas. The following day therefore under conditions already described our party started after the Mardva, expecting to go, see, and return all in twelve hours. The day having been consumed in driving to Arzamas, we decided to postpone the visit to these people until the following morning. Then we learned much to our chagrin that they had not lived in Arzamas for some centuries, but that if we cared to drive twenty or twenty-five miles farther to the village of Narishkino we would find them in abundance. We consequently left Arzamas at one o'clock and after driving forty miles over village roads we arrived at our destina-

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tion late in the afternoon. In the morning we again looked about for the object of our quest but found that the Mardva were still at some distance. They appeared to be retreating before our advance, but we were obviously gaining upon them because they were now reported to be living in a village only twelve miles away. So we took up the pursuit once more and succeeded in overtaking them at the end of twenty miles. Although we found these people far less primitive than they had seemed in Nizhni Novgorod and although we had great difficulty in discovering any distinctive cultural traits beyond the separate language, we nevertheless felt that this excursion into a very backward region was worth all that it cost in nervous energy and automobile strain. We felt at least that we merited congratulations for having caught the Mardva before they had reached the Volga River.

In concluding this account of the difficulties which the motorist encounters in finding his way about the Soviet Union I can only say that they add greatly to the joys and thrills of travel. Not to know beyond a reasonable doubt what is ahead in the way of roads and accommodations brings an element of uncertainty into the situation which is of the very essence of life. Along the Russian highways there still remains the opportunity of

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experiencing small adventures—an opportunity which has practically disappeared in America where travel by automobile has become so luxuriously standardized that one may travel from the Atlantic to the Pacific without even taking thought. I fear, however, that all too soon the Soviet Union will also be covered with sign posts and gasoline stations and rest rooms, and that the only element of adventure remaining will reside in the effort to keep one's place in the line as a steady stream of cars races in either direction along modernized chaussés. Already I hear Russians talking of overtaking and even surpassing America in the number of automobiles per inhabitant.

CHAPTER IV

The Hazards of Travel

IN a culturally retarded country of one hundred and fifty million people, embracing one-sixth of the land surface of the globe and possessing only forty thousand automobiles, one would naturally expect motoring to be attended by numerous hazards not found in the more advanced countries. My experience, as already related in preceding chapters, shows this to be the case. Those hazards, however, which in the West are supposed to be peculiar to Soviet Russia and against which I was cautioned by both American and European friends, did not materialize. I refer to homeless children, bands of outlaws, hostile peasants, and the agents of the *Gay-Pay-Oo*. I may say here that it was not the *homeless* children who caused me anxiety, that dangers from the peasants were not due to hostility, and that on many an occasion, as I was repairing a tire on a village road, I would have welcomed the services of a stout member of the political police. Regarding each of these possible sources of trouble, as well as the bands of outlaws, I shall speak in the

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proper place. Obviously the traveler could not be attacked by bandits and be followed by agents of the Gay-Pay-Oo at the same time. He must therefore be content with either the one or the other—he can scarcely hope to have both outside the scenario of a photoplay.

The most persistent legend in America regarding travel in the Soviet Union pertains to the activities of the political police. There is a very widespread belief that the foreigner who visits Russia is followed about wherever he goes by a representative of this order and that his every movement is watched and set down in secret records. The implication moreover is that he may find himself arrested on some dark night and sent off to Siberia or Central Asia without ever being given a hearing. I claim to know nothing about these matters; they lie entirely outside my experience. Agents of the Gay-Pay-Oo may have been on my trail from the moment I drove out of Leningrad until my final return to Moscow. But if they were, their mode of travel and their means of concealment remain a deep mystery. Their exploits must far surpass anything retailed in the *Arabian Nights* and should certainly be made the subject of literary exposition. And again, if they followed me, they did not, insofar as my knowledge goes, hamper my movements in the least.

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particular. What more could the most fastidious traveler ask of any representative of the police than that he conceal himself utterly and resort to no overt action! I should add, moreover, that, as the days wore on and the Gay-Pay-Oo did not come to me, I went increasingly to them for both help and information. They directed me to places where I could pass the night, they put me in touch with persons who could advise me about roads, they opened gasoline stations for me on holidays and after closing hours, they extended the hospitality of their garages and barber shops to me, and they even acted as arbiters in a certain dispute in which I became involved. And on one occasion an American friend of mine, who happened to be wearing a leather jacket, was mistaken for an agent of the Gay-Pay-Oo.

In the interests of complete accuracy there is one point at which this account requires supplementation. In a sense the Gay-Pay-Oo did control some of my movements. I carried with me a moving picture camera and took many pictures of life and institutions in Soviet Russia. I was particularly interested in photographing all forms of new construction which were under way. But to do this without a permit from the headquarters of the Gay-Pay-Oo of the region, was very commonly forbidden by governmental regulation. Al-

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though the permit was always granted on request, much valuable time was consumed. Thus, at Dnieperstroy I was delayed more than twenty-four hours by this circumstance. The difficulty was due to the fact that I arrived on Sunday and the actual headquarters of the police was located at Zaporozhi, seven or eight miles away. It was consequently difficult to reach the seat of authority. I therefore waited all day Sunday for the desired permit only to find that Monday was also a holiday. The head of the Gay-Pay-Oo in Dnieperstroy was visibly disturbed over the delay and volunteered to go with me by automobile to Zaporozhi to see what he could do. This he very generously did, the permit was granted, and I proceeded to photograph the construction. The entire procedure however, seemed to me to add a needless complication to life. Anyone genuinely interested in photographing or sketching Dnieperstroy for sinister purposes could find the means of doing so. Moreover, on this occasion, as on practically all others, no one ever asked me to show the permit which I had secured at such cost of time and pains.

If the agents of the Gay-Pay-Oo did not frequent the highways, then one would naturally assume that bandits must have been plentiful. Although I should enjoy greatly reporting an

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attack by desperadoes of some kind, I must keep to the facts and admit that this particular adventure failed to occur. Either there were no bandits in the country or they were taking their vacation when I passed through. This is the more remarkable because I could not see that the highways were patrolled in any way. According to my recollections I saw neither a mounted policeman nor a motor cop more than a few miles beyond the limits of a city. Moreover, I passed through many spots which seemed to me to be ideally situated and equipped for the practice of the profession of banditry. Just now there comes to my mind the twenty-five or thirty miles of road beyond Vladimir which is flanked by deep forest on either side, and almost the entire highway from Novorossisk to Tuapse which passes through a region of forests and mountains that must contain any number of hidden caves and lost cañons.

On several occasions I was warned against bandits. A mechanic who accompanied me to the city limits of Odessa to point out the highway leading to Kiev told me as a bit of farewell advice that I should never venture on that road alone because at certain points the country through which it passed was infested with bandits. He even went so far as to indicate on the map the approximate location of the lairs of these

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outlaws. And in Medin the manager of the auto-bus garage, where I had some repairs done, as I was about to start after dark on a walk of three miles along a country road to my car, advised me not to go alone for similar reasons. In both of these instances the bandits failed to appear. Consequently, as I look back on my travels over the highways of Soviet Russia, I think of those highways as being singularly safe for the motorist. In not a single instance did I have the slightest reason for believing that either life or property was in danger. Of course I may have been the object of any number of dark plots, from which I escaped by the breadth of a hair; but, since I knew nothing about them, they have left me entirely unmoved.

The homeless children who by now must be nearing maturity and who are supposed to roam over the Union in lawless bands living by murder and plunder, as I have already said, did not materialize. Ordinary children in the villages and along the road, however, were a source of constant anxiety to me. In fact, I am of the opinion that the children of Russia constitute the only genuine danger to the motorist. At least they were the one element in the situation that I learned from experience to fear. They seemed to regard the automobile as an object of sport and would

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throw missiles as it passed. Moreover, occasionally they would throw to kill, that is, they would throw, not pebbles, but good sized stones. By the time the journey was over the car had at least six major scars gained in this very unequal contest. Just below the rear window there was a huge dent in the body of the car. Then there were two on the right side and two on the hood. The worst of all was a crack in the windshield made by the stone of an unusually warlike youngster. But these practices are not universal among the children of the country. They are found neither in regions where the automobile has become a common object of experience nor in those regions at the other extreme where the automobile is practically never seen. They rather seem to flourish in those intermediate districts in which the adjustment to this new invention is in process. With a view to hastening the satisfactory completion of this adjustment I suggest that an additional guide to conduct be added to the existing laws and customs of the Pioneer¹: *The Pioneer does not throw stones at automobiles.*

Because of their great interest in the automobile children of course manifest other and more playful forms of behavior which at times may take on a serious aspect. Thus they cannot resist

¹A communist society for children from eleven to sixteen years of age.

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the temptation to touch the smooth and glossy surfaces of the car. In Rostov, while the machine was supposedly resting safely in the inclosed courtyard of the hotel, some youngsters thought it would be fun to rub sand over the fenders and thus presumably improve upon the original workmanship. By the time I discovered them they had practically destroyed the lustre of the varnish on the left fender. In Melitopol a boy carved some sort of hieroglyphics on one door; and in Berdyansk, I think, another developed his initiative by attacking the rear of the car in the same way. Then of course the children, unless they were carefully watched, would climb all over the automobile like a lot of monkeys. And whenever the car would slow down in their presence they regarded this as an invitation to climb upon the fenders or to sit on the spare wheel in the rear. As I think of it now, I marvel that the car came through with any paint left on its surface. In fact, in spite of the pranks of the children and the action of the elements, when it returned to Moscow for the last time it still looked like a new machine.

The peasants also constitute one of the major hazards of motoring. Not because of the manifestation of any hostility towards the motorist, as I had been led to expect, but for quite other

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reasons. Friends in both Moscow and Leningrad had told me to beware of the peasants. Some said that there is a long-standing feud between the village and city dwellers; others maintained that just at present there is going on a bitter struggle between certain elements of the peasantry and the Soviet government. In either case it seemed probable that an automobile and its occupants would be identified with the object of hostility, because automobiles come from the city and very commonly have some connection with the authorities. In view of the scarcity of cars and the brilliant lustre of the new Ford I must have looked like a commissar touring the country. Moreover, since the automobile frightens the peasant's horses, runs over his chickens, and stirs up the dust in front of his house, it is likely to breed antipathy on its own account. All of this appeared to be sound reasoning, and I went forth among the villages prepared for the worst. Contrary to expectations, however, as I shall report in detail in another chapter, I encountered nothing but friendliness and hospitality everywhere.

What makes the peasant a hazard to automobileing is not his attitude towards the motorist, but his habits while on the road. In the first place, the peasant seems to follow no clearly defined rules regarding the right of way. He drives on any

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part of the road that pleases him and turns out on either side as he thinks best. The motorist, therefore, if he would avoid a clash, must always wait to see what the peasant will do and then govern his actions accordingly. If the peasant turns to the left, then he must turn to the right; if the peasant prefers the right, he must be content with the left; and if the peasant decides to keep to the middle of the road, he must take what remains.

In the second place, the peasant knows nothing of the speed at which an automobile travels. Consequently, even though the motorist blows his horn at a great distance, unless the horse happens to be easily frightened, the peasant will often wait until the car is upon him before he begins to show signs of life. Then it may happen that, with a load of lumber or pipe which protrudes far beyond the rear end of the *telega*, he will turn sharply to one side and thus swing his vehicle across the road in such a manner as effectually to bar the way for the automobile. On several occasions I had this experience, but luckily in each instance the car was entirely under control.

In the third place, the peasant seems to do his sleeping while on the road. He therefore abandons himself and his property to the care of his horse. Before the coming of the automobile this

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habit no doubt represented a wise form of economy, but at present it greatly increases the hazards of life for both the peasant and the motorist. Moreover, it makes travel on the highways at night, unless the lights of the car are unusually powerful, extremely dangerous. Until the peasant ceases to sleep on the road every automobile that ventures beyond the limits of a city should be required by law to equip itself with a signal of at least three or four times the ordinary strength. A few horns of this type on the highway might even be expected to aid the peasant in breaking his ancient custom.

These habits of the peasants remind me of the habits of the keepers of the railroad crossings who may be found on certain of the more important highways. They are, of course, accustomed to regulate a traffic of telegas, cattle, and sheep, and they have formed the habits appropriate to the situations which ordinarily arise under such conditions. Thus, since these forms of traffic generally move very slowly, the keepers have learned to close the gates long before the arrival of the train, particularly if the road can be seen to be free for some distance. To the rapid approach of the automobile they are not adjusted. The motorist may consequently find the gates closed when no train is in sight. More serious, however, is to

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be treated like a herd of cattle, as I was on one occasion between Kiev and Gomel. The man charged with watching the particular crossing involved had apparently glanced down the road and, seeing nothing in the immediate foreground, decided to close the gates, which were made of heavy steel rails. Then, taking one more look he saw my car almost upon him and, apparently thinking that he could keep me off the tracks if he could only swing these bars across the highway in time, he worked with feverish haste. The car, of course, was going too rapidly to be stopped on such short notice and I was certain there would be a smashup. He succeeded in getting the gate on my side of the road swung around, but before he could operate the other I had turned my car and eluded him. He no doubt felt that he had been recreant in his duty and that if he had only worked with greater speed he would have kept me off the tracks. Obviously he was reacting to the automobile precisely as if it had been a herd of cattle.

The motorist in Russia learns much about the psychology of domestic animals—particularly the horse, the cow, and the dog. Each behaves after its own fashion on the approach of the automobile. I might add to the list the sheep, the hog, and various breeds of fowl, such as the chicken, the

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goose, and the turkey. The goose especially among the birds merits attention, but the limits of space make necessary the confinement of the account to the first three animals mentioned. I of course do not mean to intimate that these forms of life might not be studied in America, but along the Russian roads they still exhibit certain natural qualities which they seem to have lost in the highly industrial countries of the West. In the United States today, for example, horses and cattle have long since learned that fine roads were not built for them, and even the dog must occasionally feel himself quite out of place in the age of automobiles.

Let me frankly confess at once that, if my journey through Soviet Russia has left one thing more than another on my conscience, it is the myriads of horses that I frightened. Even now as I sit at my desk in the Grand Hotel in Moscow visions arise before me of horses and wagons careering across the meadows with drivers holding onto the reins with the grim determination of death, of horses plunging down the steep embankments of chaussés carrying their loads and masters with them, of horses rearing and backing into ditches as if to escape the approach of some terrible fate, of horses racing through the fields hitched to plows, harrows, and other farm imple-

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ments, of horses turning sharply and overturning loads of hay and stone and grain, of horses standing with quivering flesh as their owners covered their eyes with coat, blanket, or bare hand. How much damage to property my one automobile may have done, I of course have no means of knowing, but it must have been considerable. My only consolation is that I strove earnestly to make my passage through the countryside as harmless as possible. Yet clear to the end I was never certain what to do as I approached horse and wagon. Sometimes it seemed that when I passed on rapidly and noiselessly a minimum of damage was done, while at other times I am certain that only the stopping of the car averted serious accidents. Seemingly horses, like men, vary in their psychology. The coming of the automobile, however, is inevitable, and the frightening of horses perhaps must be classed among the costs of progress. Already there are many regions in Russia, particularly the environs of the great cities, where horses accept the motorcar as a normal part of their world.

The cow presents to the traveler another type of problem altogether. It is a stubborn animal and rarely subject to fright. Whether this is because it possesses horns or lacks brains, I do not know, but either explanation might be advanced.

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Having horns it has come to rely for safety upon defense rather than flight; or not being endowed with brains it may not know when it should get out of the way. One perhaps might even defend the opposing thesis that the cow having brains shrewdly guesses that the driver of the automobile is more anxious than itself to avoid collision. But whatever may be the psychology and biology of the cow, it is very commonly met with on the Russian highways. As a rule, moreover, it is encountered not alone but in herds. When the motorist sees one of these herds in the distance he must proceed cautiously, not because the animals will attack him but rather because the herd will always contain several individuals of that peculiarly wilful temper which causes them to stand right in the middle of the road until the automobile is upon them. Only when the car brushes their sides will they slowly and grudgingly make way. Certainly, whether it has brains or not, the cow has a much better technique than the horse for dealing with automobiles.

To my knowledge, the only casualties caused by the car were among the dogs. Obviously, at least in certain parts of Soviet Russia, the dog is not adjusted to the automobile. On the steppe north of the Black Sea I remember encountering a peculiarly bold and warlike breed of dogs. They

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would rush at the automobile and throw themselves upon it, as if they were attacking some form of prey. In one village, in spite of all I could do to keep clear of them, I had run over three before I could retard the speed of the car sufficiently to make their attacks harmless. A more common form of casualty is due to the failure on the part of the dog to gauge accurately the rate at which the machine is moving. Accustomed to live in a world in which they are the swiftest of living creatures, they run in front of the automobile and then discover too late that it is more fleet than they. The consequence is that in the fraction of a second the car overtakes them. A more interesting and less fatal type of response which I observed on many occasions was made by a variety of dog resembling the whippet. On seeing the car approach they would take their places along the side of the road, wait for the car to come abreast, and then without uttering a sound race the car as far as they were able. The dog thus added a certain degree of pleasure, as well as of hazard, to the journey.

One element in the Russian situation which the American motorist will have great difficulty in visualizing and which adds much to the hazards of travel is the scarcity of automobiles. Although I knew, before starting on my trip, that there

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were not more than 40,000 motor cars in the whole of the Soviet Union, I was utterly unprepared for the condition which I actually found. I did not realize to what an extent these cars are confined to the cities. I first awoke to reality on the drive from Leningrad to Moscow. In making this trip of almost five hundred miles over one of the best roads and between the two largest and most famous cities in Soviet Russia I saw but two automobiles beyond the limits of the cities through which I passed. And neither of these cars was making the journey between Leningrad and Moscow. One was loaded with pleasure-seekers near Novgorod and the other was the car of an engineer who had come out from another city to oversee some construction. In general, although certain roads were used by automobiles more than this one, my initial experience was prophetic of what I was to see elsewhere. From Odessa to Moscow, a distance of approximately one thousand miles, I encountered only six motor-cars, and four of these were trucks and auto-buses. On the highways of Russia automobiles pass as infrequently as great passenger liners at sea. Horses, wagons, cattle, sheep, hogs, and peasants on foot everywhere, but automobiles only at the rarest of intervals. Consequently, on certain roads a motorist in trouble might have to wait for

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days if he were to depend for help on the coming of a companion in the profession. If he is wise, therefore, he will go prepared to meet without outside aid any emergency which may occur. The alternative may be severe hardship and a long sojourn on a village road.

Along with the scarcity of automobiles necessarily goes a scarcity of parts and of materials generally. A few illustrations will make the point clear. In Leningrad I discovered that contrary to the order a set of tools for repairing tires had not been sent with the car. When I first learned of the deficiency, however, I felt no misgiving, because I was certain that it could be made up in Leningrad. And as soon as everything else was in order, under the guidance of the manager of the garage at which the car had been put in shape, I proceeded to look for the necessary articles. My first surprise came when I learned that such a set of tools could not be purchased in Leningrad. After reconciling myself to the thought of getting along without special tools, I turned my attention to the task of securing the bare essentials of glue and rubber. The glue I was finally able to get after visiting several shops, but the rubber I could find nowhere. We finally resorted to the primitive method of approaching chauffeurs on the street and asking them if they had a bit of rubber

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to spare. After making a number of inquiries we at last secured a small piece of rubber, containing perhaps four square inches, which had been taken from a discarded inner tube. This precious bit of material I treasured carefully all the way to Moscow, where rubber appeared to grow in somewhat greater abundance. On several occasions I found it necessary to purchase rope for the wheels of the car. Below Arzamas I ransacked a large village and was able to secure but two short pieces of rope of different diameters and entirely inadequate for my needs. At Gigant some weeks later, much to my surprise, I found an up-to-date hardware store with a large and varied assortment of rope, as well as an abundance of other materials appropriate to a shop of that kind. This unusual situation was no doubt due to the fact that here a great agricultural enterprise was being run along modern lines. In Beerzula, north of Odessa, I succeeded in finding rope only after making a thorough search of the shops. Even then I was forced to be content with a rope of narrower diameter than was desirable.

In Rostov, a city which boasts a population of approximately two hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants, I endeavored to secure a couple of small bolts for the car. Although a mechanic at the garage warned me that I would probably ex-

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perience difficulty in finding them, I was confident that he was exaggerating. At first I went to some ordinary shops, but met with no success. I was finally directed to the so-called *bazaar* which was nothing more than a great collection of small booths located on a large square. A visit to the section of the *bazaar* devoted to hardware proved to be extremely illuminating. I would go to a booth, present my sample, and inquire whether I could purchase others like it. The usual response was a negative one, but occasionally the dealer would bring out a small box of odds and ends containing screws, bolts, burrs, and other metal knick-knacks which had been collected from every conceivable source. I would then hopefully look through the contents of this box, but always without success. I explored the resources of that *bazaar* from one end to the other and at last had to confess failure. The lesson to be drawn from this experience is that the motorist, if he intends to travel far in Soviet Russia, should take with him a rich supply of spare parts and necessary materials. In this sphere he can hardly expect to live off the country.

In spite of the numerous hazards of the journey the automobile suffered but one serious accident during the entire trip. And this accident occurred on the road between Leningrad and Mos-

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cow before the car had traveled more than two hundred miles. It seemed an inauspicious beginning. I had been delayed so long in getting the car through the customs and put in running order that I decided to drive most of the night. Everything went well until I reached a point about two hundred miles from Leningrad. Here I took my eyes off the road for an instant to adjust the rubber carpet which had come loose from its fastenings. On shifting my gaze back to the highway I was startled to see a man standing almost immediately in front of me. I turned the wheel sharply to the right, but I apparently turned it too abruptly and too far. The car gave several violent lurches from side to side and at last turned over neatly and circumspectly in the very middle of the road. The time was midnight and the nearest town was thirty-five miles away. The outlook for the immediate resumption of the journey was not promising, and it even seemed that my entire enterprise had been placed in jeopardy.

On taking stock my companion and I discovered that the wayfarer who had been partly responsible for the accident had disappeared completely. He apparently thought that some terrible catastrophe had occurred and wished to avoid being implicated in it. Perhaps, however, he was only very badly frightened. Fortunately a small

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village was nearby, and we succeeded in arousing a single peasant who dressed himself and came to our assistance. But the three of us were unable to raise the automobile. The peasant therefore returned to the village and interrupted the slumbers of a couple of companions. The reinforcements were sufficient; the car soon rested on its four wheels again.

Our chief concern now was to find out if the automobile could proceed under its own power. For this we scarcely dared to hope, because the car had been badly shaken up and the side which had hit the road presented a sorry sight. The fender was severely bent, the rear wheel was slightly twisted, and the leather top had been ripped open in a couple of places. The vital question, however, pertained to the motor. Would it go? With palpitating heart I unlocked the engine, adjusted spark and accelerator, and pressed the starter. The motor revolved and the gas in the cylinders ignited! Moreover, the lights also burned. But at this point I made the devastating discovery that as the car had lain on its side the oil had been drained from the motor almost to the last drop. Here again I was fortunate beyond measure. Thinking that I might have difficulty in purchasing oil along the road, I had brought an extra supply with me. Consequently, after paying the

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peasants three rubles, refilling the motor with oil, and extending our most earnest thanks to Henry Ford, we climbed into the car and proceeded cautiously, oh! ever so cautiously, on our way. My own view is that, if I was to have an accident at all, this was precisely the best time for it to occur. From that hour on I drove with great care through the Soviet Union.

The total effect of the hazards of travel in Russia may perhaps best be measured by the condition of the car at the end of its journey. The first indication that the trip had been a hard one came to me about one hundred miles from Moscow, not far from the town of Medin. The tires almost gave out. To all outward appearances they were in fairly good condition, but they simply would not stay on the wheels. From the pounding on the roads and the use of primitive repair methods they had become extremely soft. As a consequence at a slight twist of the wheels a tire would come off and then an explosion like a pistol shot would announce a bad blowout. During the entire journey of six thousand miles I had thirty-one punctures, eleven of them occurring during the last one hundred miles. When I reached Moscow one of the tires was secured to the wheel by means of a rope and the other four were practically worthless. The car also was in need of a general

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overhauling. The ventilator was fractured, the motor was not working well, the plates of the accelerator were badly worn, the dynamo needed attention, all of the lamps were gone, and various minor injuries had been sustained. Otherwise the machine was in fairly good condition and still looked like a new car. The major point to be observed, however, is that it suffered more than if it had gone twice the distance on American roads.

CHAPTER V

Crossing the Black Sea

HERE were two occasions during the journey of ten thousand kilometers when circumstances made necessary the transportation of the car. To the second of these occasions, when the car was taken by train from Beerzula to Kiev, reference has already been made. A further report of the accommodations and difficulties encountered in this instance would throw much light upon the organization of life in the Soviet Union, but, owing to the limitations of space, I must confine the account to the first of these experiences—the crossing of the Black Sea. I make this selection because the trip by water was the more ambitious undertaking of the two and proved the more interesting. It also included most of the elements of difficulty found in the other, as well as a number in addition.

The thought of crossing the Black Sea was suggested by friends in Moscow who knew the region well and who were helping me to plan my itinerary. The idea of thus combining a trip through the western Caucasus with a trip through the Crimea—supposedly the two most beautiful and

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picturesque areas in the European part of the Union—appealed to me strongly. Moreover, these two sections were reputed to have the best automobile roads in the Soviet Union. And a glance at the map suggested that the project should be not only feasible but even simple and inexpensive. This of course was before I had done any motoring whatsoever in Russia, and I consequently was doing my thinking with images derived from experience gained in America. According to the map Nature had separated Caucasia from the Crimea only by the very narrow Straits of Kerch which connect the Sea of Azov with the Black Sea and which could not be more than three or four miles in width. Moreover, again according to the map, an excellent road extends down to the water's edge on either side. The straits therefore seemed quite as easy to pass as the Hudson River between New York and Hoboken. I had visions of driving aboard an open ferry on the eastern shore, of sitting comfortably in the car and watching the flight of sea-gulls for a brief half-hour during transit, and of driving off the ferry onto the far-famed roads of the Crimea.

Following my trip from Leningrad and my brief excursion to Nizhni Novgorod and regions beyond, I began to wonder whether after all the crossing of the Straits of Kerch would be so

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simple a matter. I made further inquiries regarding ways and means and soon learned that the project might entail the crossing of some small portion of the Black Sea. The existence of ferries also became extremely problematical; but I was assured that steamboats plying between the ports of the Caucasus and the Crimea were equipped to take automobiles. At just what ports it would be possible to embark and disembark, however, and how frequently and on what days the boats traversed these waters, no one seemed to be informed. The optimism was great, but accurate knowledge was utterly lacking. I was of course encouraged by the optimism, but the absence of knowledge troubled me as I left Moscow for the south. Yet I was certain that facts would be forthcoming long before I reached the Caucasus.

As I proceeded through the Ukraine I inquired constantly about taking the car from the Caucasus to the Crimea. I inquired at Kharkov, at Dniepropetrovsk, at Dnieproprostroy, at Ascania Nova, at Mariupol, at Stalin, and at Shterovka without adding one iota to my knowledge. Everywhere I was assured that the project was feasible, but detailed information was not to be had. Not until I reached Rostov did I learn anything that I did not know on leaving Moscow. Here I discovered a man who seemed to have fairly accurate knowl-

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edge about the ports. He told me that I would have to embark at Novorossisk or some city even further south because there were no facilities for loading the car at Anapa and other points to the north. He also stated that for similar reasons I probably could not disembark before reaching the more distant Crimean ports such as Theodosia or Yalta. He, however, could tell me nothing about the time schedules of boats. Neither did he know anything regarding costs. I should add perhaps that up to this point I could not gain the slightest notion about the charges which the transportation of the car would entail. And so the state of my knowledge or ignorance rested until I arrived on the shores of the Black Sea.

On descending the mountain to Novorossisk I went immediately to the steamship offices for information. The first bit of news was gratifying. I was told that the car could be taken across the sea by steamer and that many cars had been so transported in the past. I learned further, however, that there were only two boats equipped to render this type of service, that they left Novorossisk on but three days of the week—Sunday, Monday and Thursday—and that their first stop after leaving the Caucasian coast was Yalta. The agent said, moreover, that these two steamers had been constructed by a German firm, that their displacement

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was about five thousand tons, that they had been put into service very recently, and that they were the finest passenger boats ever to navigate the waters of the Black Sea. All of this information seemed highly satisfactory and my spirits rose perceptibly. But they were dampened somewhat when I made inquiry regarding charges. To take the car to Yalta, a distance of less than one hundred and eighty miles, would cost sixty rubles, and to take it on to Odessa, perhaps two hundred and forty miles further, would be seventeen and a half rubles more. In view of the fact that the corresponding passenger fares to Odessa, first and second class, were very reasonable, sixteen and a half and twenty-two and a half rubles respectively, these charges seemed extravagant.

I at once considered the possibility of changing my plans. Up to this point my intention had been to go by boat to some point on the Crimean coast, disembark and drive for several days through the Crimea, and then take the boat again at Sevastopol and proceed to Odessa. But I was informed now that the combined charges for taking the car on these two separate trips by sea would amount to more than one hundred rubles. Later, I learned that they probably would have exceeded one hundred and fifty rubles. The total cost for shipping the car from New York to Leningrad, including

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insurance, had been \$81.51. Because of the heaviness of these charges I finally decided to forego the trip through the Crimea and to proceed to Odessa directly from the Caucasian coast. The thought occurred to me, however, that, since the boat came from Sukhum, I might, without adding much to the cost of the journey by sea, embark at some point further south than Novorossisk, such as Sochi. With this plan held tentatively in mind I drove one hundred and thirty miles along the coast to Tuapse and there made inquiry. The information which I received, however, was not reassuring. The agent told me that the office in Novorossisk had made an error in calculation and that the charge for taking the car from Tuapse to Odessa, and by sea Tuapse was less than ninety miles from Novorossisk, would be almost double the rate which had been given me at Novorossisk —one hundred and fifty rubles. Fearing that the office in Novorossisk might discover the error, I returned immediately to this port and made arrangements for the trip to Odessa.

Since the question of rates is now in mind, before relating the story of the loading and the unloading of the car, I shall give the facts regarding charges, as events proved. When I paid my bill in Novorossisk I found that the transportation of the car to Odessa had cost, not seventy-seven and

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a half rubles as originally stated, but eighty-eight and a half rubles. It seems that the rate first given me did not include insurance, port charges, and certain other costs, none of which could be escaped if I were to take the car to Odessa. This, by the way, seems to be a frequent practice in Soviet Russia. The traveler is told that the rate will be so and so, but when he comes to pay his bill he finds that a number of items not included in the first estimate have been added. Moreover, in this particular instance I was given another surprise in Odessa. When paying port charges in Novorossisk I asked about similar charges in Odessa and was told that they would not amount to more than six or eight rubles. On arriving in Odessa I was presented with a bill for nineteen and a half rubles. After protesting violently and reporting the understanding which I had been given in Novorossisk the amount was scaled down to ten and a half rubles. This incident, along with many others that might be cited, reveals an absence of co-ordination in the economic order which, I think, is fairly characteristic of conditions in the Soviet Union today.

The loading of the car in Novorossisk really merits a separate chapter in this volume. It consumed an hour of time, an enormous amount of cerebration, and a huge quantity of energy. More-

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over, long before the car reached the deck of the steamer I was convinced that, while many cars may have crossed the Black Sea in this fashion before, the particular crew of workmen wrestling with my car had never even seen an automobile taken aboard a large boat. At the very outset one of the men who appeared to be in charge approached and asked me how the job should be done. Thinking that the workmen knew their business and that any suggestions from me would be superfluous, I replied that loading cars was not my specialty. But as the work proceeded I found it impossible to restrain myself altogether and added my own ignorance to theirs.

Everyone seemed to agree that the car could not be expected to climb the ladder like a passenger and that it would therefore have to be lifted over the side of the boat by means of a hoisting machine. I was asked about the weight of the car and, when I replied that it weighed approximately a ton, they appeared to be satisfied, because the ship was equipped with a crane having a capacity of a ton and a half. The next point to be decided pertained to the attachment of the ropes to the car. All sorts of proposals were made. One man thought the ropes should be passed under the body of the car between the front and rear wheels and that large cushions should be placed between the

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ropes and the sides of the car in order to guard the surface from abrasion. Luckily a chauffeur happened to be present, and although he knew nothing about the loading of automobiles onto ships, he did know how automobiles are constructed. He advanced the very rational suggestion that in lifting the car the weight should fall on the wheels precisely as it does when the car is doing what it is supposed to do. And this suggestion was followed.

The car was now driven and pushed upon a small platform by the side of the boat. A short unit of rope composed of several strands was then attached in the form of a loop, perhaps eighteen inches in length, about the axle of each wheel and between the inner and outer sets of spokes. A single heavy rope, possibly fifteen or twenty feet long, was now fastened at its ends to the ropes gripping the axles of the front wheels. A rope of similar weight and length was attached in the same manner to the ropes on the rear wheels. This gave two great loops of heavy rope which were brought together above the top of the car. But as I watched the proceedings now my hair began to turn gray. Workmen first climbed upon the hood of the car, but I raised no objection because I thought this might be a necessary part of the ceremony. When they began to explore the top in simi-

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lar fashion, however, I protested. At this point I was ready to give up the whole project and return to Moscow by way of Rostov. I was certain that the car would be ruined. Only when the workmen climbed off the top did my excitement abate. But the worst was still to come.

For a time it seemed that the workmen contemplated merely bringing the ropes together above the car, attaching them to the pulley of the crane, and lifting the car aboard without making any provision whatsoever for the protection of the body against the pressure of the ropes. In fact the crane began to draw the ropes before any kind of protection had been provided. The probable effect, however, was noted and then two huge planks slightly wider than the automobile were brought forward and placed transversely across the top—the one in the rear and the other in the front. The rope attached to the rear wheels was then led over the ends of the former, and the rope holding the front wheels was similarly adjusted to the latter. The power of the crane was again applied and I could see these great rough planks ripping holes into the top of the car. It was at this point that my emotional tone reached the level of greatest intensity. Again I was ready to give up the undertaking; but again my protest was heeded, cushions were placed under the planks, and the car

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was hoisted aboard. There it was quickly fastened to the deck of the ship by expert hands and everything was in order for the journey to Odessa. Apparently the only damage done had been sustained by my nervous system.

A word should be said about the human side of the process of loading the car. Needless to say, it attracted great attention. Although the hour was well towards midnight and rain was falling, quite a crowd gathered about to witness the spectacle. Certainly all of the crew not on duty, many from the office force, and a goodly proportion of the passengers stood either on the pier or on the boat. Moreover, following the Russian habit, the observers were not content to be mere observers. Every person present seemed to feel personally responsible for getting the automobile aboard, and whenever an idea or something resembling an idea occurred to him he became vocal. It is my observation that the ordinary Soviet citizen keeps very little to himself: an internal disturbance seems inevitably to lead to some overt act, usually speech. I constantly marvel that a people with such a gift for loquacity ever developed those powerful secret revolutionary organizations which finally overthrew the government of the tsar. In this particular instance all of the experience, knowledge, and inspiration in the company was brought to

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bear upon the solution of my problem. Although at times I hoped to see some individual capable of directing the affair emerge from the crowd, I was extremely grateful for the active interest displayed. And I am sure that I was not the only person present who heaved a sigh of relief when the car finally reached its resting place on board the ship.

After a pleasant voyage the boat arrived at Odessa early one morning and the task of unloading began. Possibly because there were no appreciative spectators about, the workmen were much more careless than they had been in Novorossisk. With great tacks in their boots they climbed upon the hood, stood on the fenders, and walked all over the top. The placing of the planks to separate the lifting ropes was also done indifferently. As a consequence when the car reached the wharf the top was injured in several places. And then to add to the tragedy of the occasion several of the workmen who had done the job examined the machine and exclaimed in raptures: Excellent! Excellent! Apparently they either regarded the automobile as a telega or felt that the unloading of a car without damage to the frame was a genuine achievement.

By this time I was thoroughly enraged. I went to the office of the port and put in a claim for

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damages; but the persons in charge were not impressed. They appeared to agree with the workmen that the job had been well done. They stated, moreover, that my automobile was the first to be shipped across the Black Sea uncrated and that I should be satisfied with the large measure of success which had attended the experiment. I replied that I had apparently been misinformed in Novorossisk and that I had paid enough to transport the car across the Atlantic Ocean. I also pointed out that, if the workmen had followed my instructions or had employed the slightest bit of care, the car would not have been injured.

After the generation of some further heat the officials finally began to treat the matter seriously. They suggested that we take a look at the machine. This we did, but to them, probably because they were unfamiliar with automobiles, the injuries seemed unimportant. An expert appraiser soon arrived, however, who took my view of the affair. He agreed that real damage had been done. The question of the mode of settlement now arose. The first suggestion was that I fill out appropriate papers and submit to other formalities which would postpone the adjudication of the case indefinitely. When I contended that I would probably leave Russia before the claims could be settled, that rubles would be of little value to me in

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America, and that the procedure suggested would consequently mean the practical denial of justice to a foreigner, they recognized the force of the argument and at once counseled among themselves.

The port authorities now asked me to state the size of my claim. I suggested fifty rubles, and strangely enough the manager of their garage independently arrived at the same estimate. But where were the fifty rubles to be found. The first suggestion was that the foreman in charge of the unloading of the car be held responsible. But after further discussion they concluded that this would place an excessive burden upon one man. They finally decided therefore that the load should be borne by a number of persons, including themselves, and that the car should be repaired immediately in Odessa. By this time the spirit of fairness which these men exhibited had quite dispelled my feeling of indignation and I became generous myself. I agreed to bear one-half the cost of repairing the car. Although the occasion now called for drinks all around, we reduced the formalities to a shake of the hand. The car was duly put in order and all bills were paid. So the Black Sea was crossed and nothing separated me from Moscow but one thousand miles of road. At the time, however, I was blissfully ignorant of the nature of that road.

CHAPTER VI

Gasoline and Garages

ONE of the major problems which the motorist faces in Soviet Russia has to do with the securing of oil, gasoline, and garage service. This of course is only to be expected. In a vast country occupying eight million square miles of territory and possessing but forty thousand motor cars, facilities for the care of automobiles must of necessity be extremely primitive and widely scattered. Data regarding the actual situation, however, could not be secured in America, and even in Russia the information received was often untrustworthy. Moreover, in every respect conditions were so unlike those which prevail in the United States that genuine understanding can be derived only from experience. The first time I faced the problem was on the road from Leningrad to Moscow. This experience was so revealing and in a sense so typical that I shall endeavor to set down the facts in chronological order. I shall confine the account to the one question of gasoline.

In Leningrad itself I secured gasoline from a station not unlike those lining the highways of

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America. Here I filled the tank of the car, which held ten gallons, and an extra five-gallon can which I had been advised to take with me. Before going far on the way to Moscow I discovered that the car was consuming an enormous amount of fuel. Having been warned in Leningrad that I could not expect to get the mileage from Russian gasoline that I had been accustomed to get from the American product, I assumed that the trouble was traceable to the poor quality of the fuel. Later I discovered that the carburetor had not been properly adjusted. The point of interest, however, is that I was forced to purchase gasoline wherever it could be secured.

Arriving at Chudova at a quarter of five in the afternoon I went to the gasoline station only to be told that the working day had ended at four o'clock. The agent was there, however, and after much argument and pleading he reluctantly sold me enough gasoline to take me to the next city—Novgorod. On reaching Novgorod I went to the home of an engineer, whose name had been given me in Leningrad, and through his influence was able to replenish the supply. I then went on to Valdai where I passed the night. The following morning I sought out the local gasoline station and after some delay bought more gasoline. Arriving at Vishni Volochev just at twelve o'clock I

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was surprised to find the station closed. On making inquiry I was told that the agent had gone to lunch and would be back at two. I was advised to take off a couple of hours for lunch myself and return at the appropriate hour. I replied that I must be on my way; but the inhabitants could not understand why anyone should be in such a hurry to leave their city. However, shrugging their shoulders they directed me to an auto-bus garage in the town where I succeeded in making the necessary purchase. I then proceeded on my way, reaching Tver at four o'clock only to find the station closed. But again I found the agent, and again I prevailed upon him to sell me gasoline. With this supply I drove on to Moscow.

This initial experience, as I have related it, brings out one striking difference between the American and Russian systems. In the Soviet Union everywhere the motorist is hampered in his progress by finding gasoline stations closed. Not only are they closed the greater part of the twenty-four hours—usually from four in the afternoon until eight in the morning—but they are also customarily closed on all holidays. And here one has troubles, because the weekly day of rest varies with the locality. In many places during August and September of 1929 it was still Sunday, but perhaps just as frequently, as a part of the

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anti-religious campaign, it would be Monday or some other day of the week.¹

The theory underlying this practice of keeping the gasoline stations open only at certain times is of course simple and defensible. The demand for gasoline is both limited and local. There is no reason therefore why the consumer should not be required to adjust his habits to rational hours of service. But as roads are improved, the number of cars is increased, and long-distance motoring becomes common, a new regimen will have to be established. However, I must confess that, although I encountered closed stations on numerous occasions, not once was I unable to get gasoline after explaining my situation. Whether as a foreign visitor, I was the object of some special dispensation I of course do not know. Perhaps a Russian traveler would have been treated in similar fashion. This point can only be settled by the use of the questionnaire method.

Another very interesting feature of the Soviet scheme for the distribution of gasoline is the complete absence of what might be called the spirit and tactics of salesmanship. The agent at a gasoline station in Russia is a custodian rather than a salesman. His chief business seems to be to guard rather than sell his wares. Or rather, perhaps we

¹Quite probably, because of the introduction of the uninterrupted week in the autumn of 1929, this situation has greatly changed.

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should say, he is expected to see that the sale of gasoline is made to conform to some policy of public welfare. I have heard those in charge of a gasoline station complain that there were too many demands for their commodity and have seen them refuse to sell to a customer the entire amount requested. Moreover, they are apparently expected to scrutinize the purposes for which the gasoline is to be used. Thus in certain areas of the south, where tractors are numerous, I found that the sale of gasoline during the month of September, the season of autumn plowing, was guarded with particular care. Apparently the government was determined that the basic needs of the public economy should receive first consideration and that less important interests should wait.

This way of regarding the sale of gasoline is no doubt responsible for the system of permits and records which at times the motorist may find very irksome. The first thing you must do in order to get gasoline is to convince those who dispense it that your cause is a worthy one. Ordinarily adequate authority to make this decision reposes in someone at the station itself; but occasionally the purchaser must go further. Then, having secured the necessary permission, he must sign a document or two indicating the amount and conditions of the purchase. Seemingly the agent must give a

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complete accounting of every kilogram of gasoline that comes into his possession.

How complicated the process of sale may become can be illustrated from my experience in Gomel. After making a number of inquiries I finally located gasoline at the auto-bus garage, a state institution. Going to the manager of the garage I explained the nature of my journey and asked for twenty-four kilograms of gasoline. He engaged his assistants in a short consultation and then told me that I must first secure a permit from the police. With a youngster as a guide I straightway proceeded to police headquarters, was ushered into the office of the chief, and after a moment's delay was given a written permit. Armed with this document I returned to the garage and received the gasoline. Everywhere I was treated with great courtesy, but the entire transaction consumed an hour and a half.

The precious quality of gasoline is further impressed upon the traveler by the scarcity of stations. Only in cities which possess automobiles can one feel certain that gasoline will be found. Occasionally it will show itself in other and smaller places, particularly in regions where tractors are widely used, but the motorist cannot work out an itinerary on such a slender basis of probability. One of the most frequent and urgent questions

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therefore which he must ask pertains to the location of gasoline. And if he goes into the more backward areas he will have to take an extra supply with him. For this purpose I had a couple of two and one-half gallon cans strapped to the rear of the car on either side of the spare wheel. Although these cans were empty during the greater part of my journey, they were very necessary on several occasions. Indeed, for the trip into backward regions south of Arzamas they proved almost inadequate. On this occasion by the time I returned to the base of supplies I had less than a quart of gasoline left. I had been assured that I would have no difficulty in securing gasoline at a farm commune along the way. I counted upon this assurance, and as a consequence was disappointed. The commune could boast of but one quart of gasoline, and this was in the possession of a physician. Without this one quart, however, the car perhaps would not have returned to Arzamas.

The facilities for the distribution of gasoline are most primitive in character. I have mentioned the modern station in Leningrad. I know of two in Moscow. There may be others in the Soviet Union, but I have not seen them. Ordinarily the gasoline station is housed in an ancient structure or warehouse surrounded by a board fence and located near the edge of town or city. As you drive

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in through the gate, if you are permitted to enter, you will see small areas of oil-soaked ground and numerous huge iron casks lying about. These casks are the usual receptacles of oil and gasoline. After you have signed an order for the amount of gasoline required you wait patiently while it is drained out of a cask and weighed. It is then brought to your car in a pail, often from a considerable distance, and poured into the tank through a funnel. In some cases, however, the funnel may be lacking, so you soon discover that you should carry one of your own. Not only is this process slow; it is also wasteful. As a rule gasoline is spilled at both ends of the service—when it is removed from the cask and when it is put into the car.

To an American the cost of gasoline in the Soviet Union seems inordinately high. Although Russian friends in New York had assured me that this would not be the case, thinking apparently that the huge supplies in the Union were a sure guarantee of low prices, nevertheless I went into Russia expecting to pay more than I would pay in the United States. Even so, I was unprepared for the high prices which generally prevailed. The rates of course varied with the quality of gasoline and from place to place. Generally it was cheaper in the south than in the north, although I

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secured gasoline as reasonably in Moscow as anywhere else in the Union.

The price of gasoline of the first grade ranged from approximately 22 kopecks to 38.5 kopecks a kilogram. Since a kilogram may be regarded as roughly equivalent to a quart, the cost of a gallon of gasoline, the commonly used unit in America, would vary from approximately 80 kopecks, or 40 cents, to 150 kopecks, or 75 cents. In the United States the price range is perhaps from 15 to 30 cents. In the case of oil, on the other hand, the difference was in favor of Russia. Although I have paid as high as 60 kopecks a kilogram, the more common price was 25 kopecks. In America the usual price is 25 cents. In quality I found the Russian gasoline and oil both excellent. And perhaps I should close this reference to prices with the statement that on two occasions, at Gigant and at the Kamensky metallurgical factory near Dniepropetrovsk, gasoline was given to me without charge.

As a result of all of the difficulties which surround the purchase of gasoline the motorist feels himself terribly and unnecessarily delayed. On rare occasions I would be served in as few as ten minutes, but the usual amount of time required was three-quarters of an hour. In extreme cases even an hour and a half would be consumed. If

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one is going but short distances, this may not seem important; but if one is taking a long journey by automobile, as I was, the repeated delays day after day and day after day eventually try one's patience. Perhaps the solution to the problem is to construct larger tanks for cars to be used in Russia so that the number of visits to the gasoline station may be reduced to the minimum. I, however, would prefer another solution. If the Soviet system of guarding the public interest could be combined with the American system of quick service, the outcome should be ideal.

The garages which I saw and patronized on my journey were of the greatest variety. I had dealings with large garages and small garages: with private garages, with auto-bus garages, with ordinary state garages, with garages of Sovtorgflot, with garages of fire departments, with garages attached to factories, with garages associated with farm communes, and with garages of the Gay-Pay-Oo. On the material side these garages left much to be desired. In only one instance, according to my memory, was the garage housed in a new building, and that was in Kharkov. The description which I have given elsewhere of the first garage which I saw in Leningrad may serve very well for garages everywhere in Soviet Russia—almost universally old buildings surrounding a

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courtyard, the remains of cars of an ancient vintage, a few well-used machines of antiquated but more recent models, and from two or three to a dozen eager workmen who believe that the motor car is the greatest of human inventions and are convinced that within a few years there will be millions of automobiles in Soviet Russia.

Often I went to these garages merely to find shelter for the car. And on those occasions I learned to admire the consummate skill with which the Russian chauffeur can back and maneuver an automobile into the most unlikely nooks and corners. The buildings which they use were of course intended for other purposes—shops, dwellings, or stables. They are consequently ill-adapted to the housing of automobiles. The rooms do not have the proper proportions, the partitions are likely to be in the wrong place, and the space may be utterly inadequate for the number of cars which the garage is supposed to shelter. The chauffeur has therefore been forced by circumstance to learn to back his car around beams and through openings where there is not an inch to spare. To be sure, the man who is doing the job always receives the unrestrained verbal support of all persons standing about. And one of the most amazing things is not only his driving skill but also his ability to select from this flood of ad-

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vice the particular elements which are pertinent and trustworthy. Or perhaps he ignores it all and actually follows his own counsel.

In many instances, however, the car had to be content with something less than the shelter of a garage. This was particularly true in the villages where there were of course no facilities intended for automobiles. But I found that the part of the dwelling which was designed to house the domestic animals proved to be an excellent shelter for the automobile. Where such arrangements were not available, and this happened often, the car passed the night under the stars without the protection of either roof or fence.

Before starting on my journey, by the way, I was cautioned particularly against ever permitting the car to stand in such fashion in a village. I was told that, if I should do so, I would find no automobile awaiting me on my return, that the peasants would simply dismantle the car, making way with tires, wheels, and anything else which they could pry loose. I was advised therefore that, if I should ever find it necessary to leave the car all night without the protection of lock and key, I should employ someone to watch it. Although I ignored this advice completely on a number of occasions I did not suffer the loss of a single screw as a consequence. My good fortune may have been

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due to the fact that I had a closed car. The one real danger to an unguarded automobile, according to my experience, is that children may be tempted to carve their initials on its sides. The carving of my car, however, to which I have already referred, took place in the cities and not in the villages.

My major interest in garages was for repairs rather than for shelter. And here I would draw a clear line of demarcation between garages run for profit by private individuals or groups and garages under the management of the state or some institution. As a rule I secured excellent service from both, but in the calculation of charges they seemed to follow very different principles. In practically all cases the non-public enterprises charged all that the traffic would bear. The private garage in Leningrad that put the car in order asked 100 rubles for a job which they finally did for one-half that sum; a private electrician in Melitopol charged me five rubles for an hour's work on the lamp connections; and a private vulcanizing shop in Mariupol asked five rubles for repairing a couple of punctures. And so it was everywhere. The private establishments charged me whatever they thought I would pay. The explanation of course may be found in part in the very heavy taxes which are levied on these establishments, but

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I am convinced that other factors were at work. The principle of individual profit underlying the private shop tends to generate a characteristic attitude towards the customer.

My experience with the state garages on the other hand was most pleasant from the beginning to the end of my journey. They seemed to follow a definite formula in the fixing of charges—so much for labor and so much for materials. In not a single instance did I feel that I had been overcharged; in fact my feeling, strange as it may seem, was of precisely the contrary character. Again and again I felt that I was paying too little for the service rendered. In many instances they actually rendered service freely. Thus, at Nizhni Novgorod the battery was put in order without charge; at Dnieprostroy the car was cleaned inside and out without charge; at Melitopol a tire was repaired without charge; and at Novorossisk the car was completely lubricated from one end to the other without charge. But the most extreme case of the extension of hospitality occurred at Medin, as I was struggling to bring the car back to Moscow. The auto-bus garage there refused to take a kopeck for a small can of glue, a kilogram of oil, a full day's work on my tires, and numerous other minor materials and services. When I insisted that, if I were not allowed to pay the institution, I

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should at least be permitted to give something to the boy who had vulcanized the tires, the manager said that this would not be proper. Many other experiences of a similar, though less impressive type, could be cited, because my journey was simply packed full of them. They were so common that I eventually reached such a point of personal demoralization that I almost expected them. I am sure that there is no other place in the world where an American motorist would be undercharged. It is a unique and certainly a most satisfying experience.

The explanation of this phenomenon is not easy. No doubt many factors enter into it. Soviet Russia is just emerging from the simplicity of a rural society, and the people of the smaller communities are often embarrassed when asked to place a price on anything. I can recall encountering the same attitude of mind in some of the more backward regions of the United States which have not come under the sway of a money economy. But if this were the true and adequate explanation of the phenomena under examination, it should apply equally to private and public garages.

The more fundamental consideration, I think, is that the state garage is not conducted as a commercial or profit-making organization. It is usually an adjunct of some important institution, such

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as the city government, an industrial enterprise, or an auto-bus line. It is consequently not organized to render service to solitary motorists who happen to be passing through; and when it does render such service it goes somewhat beyond its legitimate and customary province. Workmen do not know what to charge for repairs, because as a rule they never make charges. Also I am convinced that the state garage is developing a new attitude towards work and compensation. That urge for the accumulation of profits which characterizes private enterprise is largely lacking. And the fact that I was a foreign visitor engaged in a very unusual undertaking no doubt played its part. But whatever the explanation, I left Soviet Russia with a very profound sense of gratitude towards the workmen in the state garages because of the generosity, the courtesy, and the kindly interest which they extended towards a traveler in a strange land.

The auto mechanics from whom I received service impressed me very favorably. They appeared to be entirely competent and well trained for their work. Moreover, the extraordinary eagerness with which they examined the mechanism of my automobile revealed a genuine interest in their profession. I recall particularly the look

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of anticipation on their faces when they would ask me if they might be permitted to lift up the hood and examine the motor. Although in many instances the mechanics who worked on the car had never before seen one of the new Fords, they seemed to have no difficulty in understanding it. As far as my knowledge goes, no mechanic ever injured the car in an effort to repair it or put it in order. Anyone with automobile experience knows that this is a strong statement. Furthermore the Russian mechanic seems to exhibit quite an extraordinary measure of ingenuity. This of course has been forced upon him. A man lacking ingenuity would simply have to quit the automobile business in the Soviet Union. Until quite recently practically all of the cars in use were unbelievably antiquated, and even today spare parts are as rare as snakes in Ireland. One wonders that half of the cars in Russia will run at all. The auto mechanic therefore has been trained in a hard school; he has been compelled to invent and improvise; he is a very dependable person in time of difficulty. If I were to undertake a long journey by automobile anywhere over difficult roads and far from a base of supplies, I am sure that I would want a Russian mechanic as a companion.

I cannot close this account, however, without

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reporting one experience of a rather unpleasant character which I had with a mechanic. I relate this, not because it tells anything about the Russian mechanics in general, but rather because it throws a very interesting sidelight on the evolution of Soviet institutions.

At Dnieprostroy a mechanic in the garage told me that he would like to accompany me as far as Ascania Nova. My Russian companion and I talked the matter over and, mindful of the favors which we had received at the garage, we invited him to join us. On the way he insisted on driving the car. This I permitted him to do for a short distance when, to my surprise, I discovered that he was not a competent chauffeur. Indeed he was so incompetent that on one occasion I had to back the car out of a garage for him. He was nevertheless a very pleasant fellow, and, as I thought, was doing what he could to pay for the ride. He even endeavored to ingratiate himself by telling me that he was not a Bolshevik and that he would like to come to America to live.

Everything went well until the time of parting in Melitopol. He then to our great surprise asked to be paid a chauffeur's wages for the time that he had been with us. I explained that I had no need for a chauffeur, that I had allowed him to accom-

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pany us merely as a favor, that his presence had made it necessary for my companion to ride in the back seat, and that in addition he was not a competent chauffeur. Reacting to the last point he produced, as proof that he could drive, although experience supported my contention, an official chauffeur's license duly signed and stamped. We argued for some time and finally I offered him a ten-ruble note which was more than sufficient to pay his expenses back to Dnieprostroy. In view of the misunderstanding that had arisen I did not feel wholly free of obligation in the matter. In the meantime a crowd had gathered about and he, in spite of his earlier repudiation of the doctrines of Marx, began to appeal for support to the workmen among the bystanders. I consequently began to wonder what the outcome would be. We finally decided to arbitrate the matter through the offices of the Gay-Pay-Oo. We found a young man, not more than thirty years of age, in charge and laid the case before him. The position which he took was entirely contrary to my expectation. He turned to the mechanic and told him that he was behaving not like a workman but like a merchant. He apparently felt that this was the most severe censure which he could pass upon any man's conduct. He then apologized to me and said that the

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mechanic was obviously an ignorant man and still under the influence of the older ideology. The question of the payment of the ten rubles he left to me. I then gave this amount to the mechanic, expressed my feeling of gratitude towards the representative of the Gay-Pay-Oo, and proceeded on my way in a world turned upside down.

CHAPTER VII

Food and Shelter

HE who would travel through Soviet Russia by automobile must be prepared to abandon for the time many of the material comforts of life. This is particularly true if he would leave the chaussés, keep away from the great cities, and make his way through the villages and smaller communities. He must be ready at times even to do without some of those things which he has come to regard as necessities. In general, however, the conditions as I found them were better than they had been pictured. According to rumors which I heard in Moscow in June and July the villages were without food and the peasants were actually starving. Although I did visit regions in which there was undoubtedly considerable privation and although I often found the diet of the villages somewhat monotonous, I could find no evidence to support these rumors. Neither could I find any grounds for another assertion, which was sometimes made, that Moscow was being supplied with food at the expense of other places in order to deceive the foreign visitor in the capital.

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No one, however, would deny that the period of my visit to Soviet Russia was characterized by a considerable measure of food stringency. The sale and purchase of the staple commodities, such as bread, meat, sugar, and butter, were regulated by rationing booklets issued to the population. Only by the use of one of these booklets, containing detachable coupons for each commodity and for each day of the month, could these foods be secured at the shops. Of course the foreign traveler supposedly is not affected by these regulations because it is assumed that he will not desire to purchase unprepared foods but will rather patronize the hotels and restaurants. However, if he cares to establish residence somewhere, he will have no difficulty in obtaining the desired booklet.

This method of regulating the distribution of the staple foods at a time of scarcity may appear to work considerable hardship, because people are not permitted to purchase unlimited quantities of the commodity rationed. On the other hand, the method has very great merit: it is a substitute for the raising of prices and thus represents an effort to insure the equitable distribution of the goods involved. In a capitalistic country, under similar conditions, the prices would be raised to that point which would bring the demand into harmony with the supply. The poor then would have to go with-

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out bread. Under the system of regulation practiced in Soviet Russia the price of bread is kept near the cost of production.

A word should be said here regarding bread lines. When I arrived in Moscow early in June I expected to see these lines, because they had been reported so frequently in the Western press. At first I thought that I saw them, but later I discovered that I had been mistaken. During my stay of six or seven months in Soviet Russia I did not see a single bread line, if by a bread line is meant a line of persons waiting to buy a limited supply of bread. On many occasions I did see long waiting lines on the streets. These lines I interpreted as bread lines until I began to visit the shops myself. Only then did I discover my mistake. I saw lines of people waiting to purchase certain kinds of meat or various types of manufactured goods, such as muslin or rubbers, but I did not see bread lines. Moreover, the longest lines I ever saw were in front of moving-picture theaters.

While living in Moscow in June and July I used a rationing booklet myself, but it was of no value in other cities. This, however, proved to be no hardship, because I usually ate in public dining rooms of one kind or another or in private homes. Moreover, there were many kinds of food which one could purchase without the help of a booklet,

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such as ham, bacon, candies, cakes, caviar, fish, wine, jams, fruits, vegetables, and all sorts of canned goods. Also I discovered that my foreign citizenship helped me on numerous occasions. In about one-half of the shops in Moscow and almost everywhere in the provinces I was able to secure butter, bread, or sugar merely by making known my need and my nationality. Thus, wherever I went I was able to secure the foods of the region.

In the cities the variety of foods available in the restaurants was very great; and anyone adjusted to the Russian diet would suffer no inconvenience. To a much larger degree than in other countries, however, so it seemed to me, the printed price lists in the restaurants belied the actual resources. While this may have been due to the fact that the items which interested me were often the west-European dishes for which there was little or no demand among the local population, I am inclined to think that the situation in the dining halls merely reflected the genuine scarcity of certain kinds of food. Even so, a large number of choices ordinarily remained and I had no difficulty in satisfying my wants. The only articles of diet which I really missed and which were absent in many restaurants, even in the larger cities, were white bread and butter. But here I was exhibiting weaknesses which the traveler should leave behind him

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if he would venture beyond the walls of those great hotels where an effort is made to cater to Western tastes.

In the villages the situation is quite different. There the situation assumes an extremely primitive aspect and the fare is reduced to the barest necessities. The traveler is fortunate if he finds borsch, black bread, tea, sugar, boiled eggs, and a little jam. While this diet may seem quite sufficient to one who has never tried to subsist upon it, and while it may satisfy one completely for a meal or two, it becomes excessively monotonous after the first day and a half. In many peasant households in which I passed the night the diet was of course even more restricted. On the other hand, occasionally one will find potatoes and some form of meat, and even butter and milk; and in the Ukraine, the season being right, there will be delicious melons of different kinds and various forms of fruit. In the Crimea and the Caucasus the varieties of fruit will of course be greatly increased. Moreover, although, according to my experience, the bread will always be black, it will never be absent. Thus the fare in the villages is very coarse and meager, but adequate, if my eyes did not deceive me, to sustain a very sturdy race.

The problem of securing drink is perhaps more difficult than that of securing food. Although the

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water in certain of the larger cities, which have fairly modern water and sewage systems, is probably free from infection and therefore safe, the traveler is everywhere warned against it. He is advised to drink nothing but boiled water. In the villages, where water is invariably supplied by wells, this admonition should certainly be followed. Yet, I did not obey it on all occasions, and apparently my transgressions were attended by no ill effects.

In Russia, however, one is not entirely dependent on plain water. In the first place, there are the excellent mineral waters from the Caucasus which are available in bottles at the shops of all the larger communities and which are of unsurpassed quality; in the second place, there are numerous soft beverages, such as kvas, citro, and lemonade, which can be found in unlimited quantities in these same shops; and finally there is that wide range of drinks which the American citizen, while at home, can secure only at the risk of arrest and by being a party to the violation of the fundamental law of his country—most excellent beers, wines and liquors. I do not include vodka in this list, because I would place it along with nitroglycerine among the high explosives rather than among the beverages. It is plain therefore that the traveler in Russia can satisfy his thirst in the greatest variety of

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ways, and that, if he will but exercise a bit of foresight, he should never be without that particular brand of liquid which his nature craves. If these facts were only more widely known in the United States, I am certain that the number of summer visitors to the Soviet Union would greatly and rapidly increase.

The motorist in Russia must also learn to be content with primitive living accommodations. Even in the large cities the hotels lack many of the conveniences to which the American traveler is accustomed. Thus, to my knowledge, there is scarcely a hotel in the Soviet Union that reaches the standard of comfort set by the better municipal hotels in the United States. In the smaller cities, taking the place of the hotel, will be found the so-called *house of peasants*. But in the village the only place available is the home of some peasant. During my journey I passed the night in hotels, houses of peasants, houses of scientists, rooming houses, school houses, workers' homes, peasants' homes, peasants' barns. I even spent two nights in the automobile. I shall now describe these different types of accommodations.

The hotels in the larger cities, such as Nizhni Novgorod, Kharkov, Rostov, and Kiev, are quite satisfactory. The rooms are commodious and clean and often give evidence of having been lux-

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uriously furnished in pre-revolutionary days. Only very rarely, however, is a private bath attached to a room, and running water is usually absent. The furnishings of the room commonly consist of a table, a chair or two, a bit of faded carpet, and a bed. There may or may not be pictures on the wall. The bed is ordinarily a simple cot with inadequate springs and mattress and will probably be equipped with two sheets and a blanket. The hotel may boast an elevator; but, as often as not, this product of industrialism will not be working. In even the best of Russian hotels today there is little extravagance. For these accommodations you will probably be asked to pay from three to eight rubles a day.

The house of peasants is the hotel of the small city or large town. As the name implies, it is designed primarily to meet the needs of peasants, although it is of course patronized by travelers generally. And even before you enter the building you will see abundant evidence that the peasant has put his mark upon the institution. Peasants and telegas will be standing in front of the building and peasants engaged in conversation will be congregated about the entrance. As you walk up the steps leading to the door and even as you proceed to the office within, you will probably observe fragments of manure left by the boots of peasants.

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Your nostrils will also tell you of an intimate connection with the stable. The room to which you are led will be small and, if designed for a single occupant, will contain a cot and perhaps a chair or a table. The cot, which is the chief object of interest, will probably have no springs. The mattress, moreover, will seem singularly hard and designed to guard the occupant against over-indulgence in sleep. There will be a single sheet and a blanket, if you require one. I could never determine whether the sheet was expected to protect me from the mattress or the blanket. The protection which it affords, however, if such is the intention, is sometimes limited by the fact that it has not visited the laundry since other guests occupied the cot. The room may be fastened by means of a padlock rather than the ordinary lock. The charge will range from one to three rubles.

Wherever there is a university or higher school there is likely to be a house of scientists. This is an institution organized to render various services to resident professors, teachers, and scientific workers generally, and to provide living accommodations for visiting members of these professions. The traveler is fortunate if he can secure lodging here, not because the house of scientists is luxuriously equipped, but rather because of the assured cleanliness of everything and the excel-

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lence of the associations. The facilities are those of a modest university dormitory in the United States, except that you are required to furnish your own blankets. What the charges are I do not know, because on the two occasions when I enjoyed the privileges of the house of scientists I was extended the courtesies of a guest of the institution.

The rooming houses which you must patronize in the smaller places vary enormously in character. Some of them are quite as good as the better hotels of the cities, while others are extraordinarily primitive. I shall describe one of the latter in which I spent the night in Beerzula. The house seemed to consist of a covered and partly enclosed rear porch, a living and dining room, and a sleeping room. Moreover, all of the rooms were very small. I was shown a cot in one corner of the bedroom which was equipped with a couple of pillows for a mattress and a single sheet for covering. Being considerably fatigued I retired early and awoke the following morning to discover three other men and a woman occupying the room with me. The manager of this establishment, if it could be so dignified, had told me the evening before that he was not a Communist and did not sympathize with communist ideas. I was consequently

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not surprised when he charged me two rubles for my corner of his room.

On a number of occasions I passed the night in school houses. For traveling teachers thus to utilize the school premises seems to be a common practice in Russia. I would like to recommend the idea to those apostles of efficiency in the United States who advocate the continuous use of the school plant. The character of the accommodations varies of course from community to community. In many places the school is equipped with cots which are devoted to this purpose, while in others the wayfarer must be content to sleep on the floor. In either event, however, he is expected to provide his own blankets. While the service could scarcely be regarded as luxurious, there are compensations. Apparently this privilege of making use of the school building, is extended freely to members of the teaching profession.

The homes of workers, though often crowded, may be very satisfactory. I recall with particular pleasure a new communal home in which I passed the night near Shterovka, where a gigantic electric station was under construction. Since the site selected for this enterprise was far away from population centers, the creation of a new community was necessary. The town has therefore been built according to a plan and there are model workers'

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homes everywhere. These homes are exceedingly attractive both inside and out. The building in which I passed the night would probably accommodate a hundred persons and was equipped with kitchen, dining room, and bathing facilities. My companion and I were given a room which was large, airy, light and clean and was equipped to take care of four persons. There were excellent tables, chairs, and cots. One point, however, which disturbed me on this as well as on other occasions was the feeling that this excellent building was not receiving proper care. Among other things, the plumbing was out of order. As yet the Russian workers have not learned to make proper use of many of the privileges which they enjoy.

The peasants' homes of course provided my most primitive sleeping accommodations. Nevertheless they were somewhat better than I had expected. The ordinary cottage in which I passed the night had three rooms. There was commonly a kitchen, a living room, and a guest room. I was told that this third room is never used by the family but is reserved exclusively for guests. As a rule, however, it left much to be desired. It was often small and not even equipped with a bed of any description. Under these circumstances the guest is of course forced to arrange a bed on the floor with whatever blankets may be available. Yet it

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was in the guest room of a Kuban Cossack that I was introduced to the luxury of sleeping on pillows in the place of a mattress. At first I demurred, because a pillow seemed to merit better treatment and because the custom was strange to me, but before the night was over I was quite ready to make the practice universal. The five great pillows on which I slept that night provided the most comfortable bed I ever had in Soviet Russia. Another feature of the guest room which I never failed to note were the ikons hanging in the corner. Even where the younger generation had espoused communist doctrines these symbols of the past remained apparently as a concession to the wishes of the older members of the family. The process of paying for the accommodations is something of a ceremony. Your hosts of course will never ask you for a kopeck; and, when you mention the subject of payment, they will assure you that nothing is required and that they are more than satisfied with having had you as their guest. Nevertheless you are expected to pay. I found that a ruble and a half per person for a night's lodging, which included one meal, was sufficient to bring smiles to the face of the housekeeper.

The most disagreeable nights of the entire trip were the two nights which I spent in the car when it was taken by train from Beerzula to Kiev. It

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was the end of September, the nights were cold, the wind was blowing, and the automobile was standing without protection on the floor of an open freight car. I was wearing a thin summer suit, I had a light overcoat with me, and my bedding consisted of a single blanket of very modest thickness. Although I closed the doors and windows of the car and endeavored to stop all the remaining crevices through which the cold air was pouring, I was frightfully cold nevertheless. I spent most of the night vainly trying to make my one blanket cover all the cold areas of my body. Anyone wishing to know how long a night can be should duplicate my experience. I had known nothing like it since those almost forgotten days when as a boy I sought adventure camping in the woods on an autumn night about a fire that always went out.

There are certain general questions regarding living accommodations in Soviet Russia, as I found them, which merit specific attention. There are the questions of toilet arrangements, bathing facilities, domestic insects, tipping practices, and the ever-present document. Although generalization is difficult, I shall endeavor to summarize my experience.

Without doubt the most repulsive feature about travel in Russia is the quality and condition of

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toilet arrangements. Even in the hotels of the great cities they are far from satisfactory. Often the toilets are not working; and, when they are in order, they are terribly abused by those who patronize them. Apparently the population lacks the habits which are essential to the proper functioning of this particular element of industrial civilization. In the so-called houses of peasants, as a rule, no effort to introduce modern toilet facilities has been made. Where any arrangements whatever are provided within the building they are of such a primitive character that one hesitates to use them. More often, however, the facilities are outside; and then of course they are no better. In some instances, moreover, no special arrangements exist. If you ask about the toilet you will merely be told that it is in the yard. In the villages the same primitive conditions prevail. From the standpoint of both hygiene and æsthetics a Union-wide campaign for the modernizing of toilet arrangements should be made.

Bathing facilities are also very inadequate. From Kharkov to Rostov, the region of dirt roads and dust, I actually craved a warm bath, but it could not be had in any hotel at which I stopped. Moreover, in the hope of finding this luxury I sought out the best hotels in Dniepropetrovsk, Melitopol, Berdyansk, and Stalin. On several

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occasions I found bathtubs or showers, but no warm water. Here and there in these cities there were public baths, but only in Stalin did I find one open at a time when I was free. The traveler in the Soviet Union must learn to reduce the number of his baths.

The situation with respect to insects was much better than I had anticipated. This does not mean that these friends of man cannot be found in Russia. As a matter of fact I have found them in some of the best hotels in the country, and they are very common in the places of lower grade and in the peasants' homes. Yet I must admit that on many occasions they seemed to be wholly absent in just those places where I had every reason for expecting to encounter them in great abundance. And it seemed to me that they were met with more frequently in the north than in the south. This impression, however, may be due to the fact that the first part of my trip was taken in the north. At that time I was still tender and therefore presented an irresistible temptation to the various members of the insect tribe. The reader can easily imagine with what shouts of joy the many-legged inhabitants of a hotel, rooming house, or peasants' hut must have greeted the news of my arrival during those early days before I had become hardened. At any rate, whatever the explanation, they

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certainly seemed to bother me less the longer I remained in Russia.

One of the most pleasing features of travel in the Soviet Union is the relative absence of tips. After leaving the Grand Hotel in Moscow I passed through a vast country where apparently tips were neither given nor expected. In Kharkov, Rostov, and Kiev I remember dispensing a few coins, but in the smaller places the practice certainly was not customary. And although this is in harmony with the social doctrine of the Revolution, I am inclined to the opinion that the explanation resides in part elsewhere. Many sections of rural Russia remind me of similar areas in rural America of half a generation ago. In that rural America tips likewise were neither given nor expected. Russian peasants, like American farmers, do not hand out gratuities. I sincerely hope that the revolutionists will succeed in perpetuating this very desirable rural trait.

The ever-present document constitutes one of the handicaps under which the traveler suffers. No one goes about in Russia today without some kind of paper of identification. The Soviet citizen carries a sort of domestic passport and the foreigner of course carries the passport of his country. Seemingly every licensed hotel or rooming house requires this document of you on your arrival,

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and, in case you remain more than twenty-four hours, registers it with the police. The way in which this practice slows down and hampers the movement of the population is perfectly obvious. Because of the relatively small amount of travel in the Soviet Union at present, the extent of this waste is probably not apparent; but, if a similar practice were introduced into a busy metropolitan hotel in the United States its crippling influence would be keenly felt. Moreover, since an individual can travel from private home to private home across the Union without ever being asked to show his document, its value as a police measure would seem to be highly doubtful. In some instances, however, the regulation has its humorous side. Thus my host in Beerzula, wishing to make the proper entry in his books, asked me of what country I was a citizen. He started to write down United States¹ when he discovered that he could not spell the words. He then inquired whether this country was not in North America. On being told that it was he entered me in his records as a citizen of that continent. And in Roslav the girl in the office of the hotel, being unable to make anything out of my passport, was entirely satisfied to accept in its stead a Russian letter of introduction.

This account of food and shelter may very prop-

¹The Russian words are much more difficult to spell than the English words.

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erly be closed with a reference to the courtesies and even special privileges which were extended to me as a foreign visitor. Everywhere, as soon as I made my citizenship known, someone was ready to make my troubles his own. Even persons half-drunk did not forget the favored position to which the foreigner is entitled by tradition in Russia. And in practically all instances officers of the law were ready to overlook my infractions of police regulations. On several occasions such infractions, which might have resulted in arrest or fines, if committed by Soviet citizens, called forth apologies from the officers when they discovered that I was an American. A Russian friend and I violated a city ordinance by getting off a street-car in Moscow while the car was still in motion. A policeman approached and began to administer a rebuke. My friend, who had led the way off the car pointed to me and uttered the magic word *inostranjets* (foreigner). Nothing more was necessary. The officer apologized abjectly and returned to his duty of directing traffic. The whole Russian attitude towards visitors from other lands is well summarized in the remarks of an old lady in Valday who after looking me over said, "I thank God that my eyes have at last rested upon a foreigner."

CHAPTER VIII

The Land and the People

THE success of the great experiment now under way in the Soviet Union is of course being severely conditioned today and will continue to be so conditioned in the future by the quality of the antecedent civilization, the character of the people, and the nature of the country. While it is clearly impossible to treat subjects of such magnitude adequately in a short chapter, nevertheless they cannot be left out of the account entirely. The motorist is in a peculiarly good position to form judgments on all of these matters. He is able to cover vast areas of territory, he has innumerable dealings with persons and institutions, and he is almost constrained to live off the land as he passes through. Under such conditions he will not only form many new judgments but he will also modify a goodly proportion of his old opinions. This at least was my experience.

The overwhelming impression which the traveler carries away from an extended trip through the Soviet Union is that the civilization inherited

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from the tsar was deeply and primitively rural. It was a civilization of the earth and the elements; it was bound by dust and mud and rain and snow. Before my journey by automobile I had often seen figures showing the percentage of the population living in the villages, but I had never fully grasped their significance. I continued to think of Russia in terms of images derived from residence in the great cities and a few rides by train through the intervening districts. These rides, moreover, were of very little value in correcting the perspective gained from urban contacts, because they were mostly taken by night.

When I think of Russia today, I think of the long succession of villages which, as the regions change, melt imperceptibly into different types; I think of the roads along which one may travel hour after hour, and even day after day, without encountering a single motor vehicle; I think of the endless procession of peasants, horses, and herds of sheep and cattle on the highways; I think of the frightened movements of the horses and the looks of consternation on the faces of the peasants as I drove early one morning into a great square in Valday; I think of the long lines of telegas on the road below Kharkov making their way homeward as night was beginning to fall; I think of the grass-covered highways of the north with their

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hidden ruts that lay in wait for the wheels of the car, of the stifling clouds of dust that ever hung about me in the Ukraine during August and early September, and of the cold rains of autumn that seemed to pursue me as I fled towards the hard roads leading to Moscow and safety. The task of integrating this widely sprawling civilization by means of modern highways and other agencies of transportation and communication is a task of gigantic proportions. But before the first dreams of the builders of the new social order are realized this task must be accomplished.

The standard of living and material possessions is extremely low. While the differences between the more fortunate elements in the city and the inhabitants of the villages, and between the poorer and richer peasants, are of course very great, a general condition of poverty prevails everywhere. The situation of the ordinary peasant can be duplicated in America only among the rural negroes of the South and the inhabitants of remote and isolated mountain regions. He seems never to be far from utter want or even starvation. His farm is small, his livestock few, his dwelling crude, his tools primitive, his food just enough for subsistence, and his clothes merely a covering for his body. The death of a horse or a cow may spell disaster to a family, and the pur-

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chase of a pair of boots may assume the proportions of a large commercial transaction. Almost from birth life takes on the character of a grim struggle to satisfy the most elementary of human needs.

In the cities the situation is in many respects but little better. The housing accommodations are entirely inadequate for the population, the use of clothing as a means of ornament and ostentation is strikingly absent, and the process of preparing and serving food is reduced to its simplest dimensions. And here, as in the village, the material conditions of existence bear so hard upon the individual that there is neither time nor resources for cultivating many of the graces of life. Although this general impression is no doubt exaggerated by the conscious promotion of the proletarian ideal, it is for the most part, I think, a response to circumstance. Even for the most fortunately situated elements of the population, extravagant living is impossible and unthinkable. There is little luxury in Soviet Russia today, and the leaders are determined that there shall be none until the standard of living of the masses has been raised.

There is no doubt some relationship between standard of living and cultural level. Yet the general condition of material want to which I have

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referred is accompanied by the greatest cultural diversity. I am not referring here, moreover, to the presence of various national cultures in the Soviet Union, but rather to the wide differences in cultural level within a particular nationality. Thus the contrast between the educated classes in the cities and the peasants in some of the more backward areas is almost immeasurable. So striking are these differences that the observer, if he did not have the evidences of anthropology before him, could scarcely believe that the two groups belong to the same race. In the Old Russia the members of the intelligentsia were familiar not only with their own science, literature, and art, but also with the science, literature, and art of the world. And this tradition survives today. In spite of poverty and political barriers Soviet Russia has provided on a large scale for the rapid translation and publication of important works appearing in other languages. Moreover, the active element in the working class represents a level of intellectual culture which, I think, is probably not equalled by the workers in any other country.

In contrast with the position of the intellectual classes the cultural backwardness of the peasantry, an evil heritage from the old régime, is the more appalling. Here may be seen a perfect cor-

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relation between living conditions and degree of enlightenment. The poverty of material possessions is only matched by the poverty of mind. This relationship was impressed upon me particularly on one occasion when in a remote village I watched the burial of an eight-year old boy from a poor peasant family. The mother and father and eight or ten friends were gathered about the open grave as another member of the party filled in the broken earth. From time to time the mother would break into lamentations and call the name of her little son. But these lamentations seemed to fall upon unsympathetic ears. The man who was using the spade would chide her, saying that her grief was all pretension and that within the year another child would come to take the place of the one who had died. Then when the little mound over the grave was completed she dried her tears, of which there were not many, and taking a half dozen apples from the pockets of her coat, she distributed them among the children present, thereby no doubt through the observance of an old funeral custom doing what she could to spread the disease.

The ordinary peasant, inured to privation, ignorant of the comforts of life, and with his knowledge of the world bound by the horizon and the teachings of the priests, expects little from this

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world beyond the satisfaction of his uncultivated animal wants. Even his knowledge of agriculture, the basis of his livelihood, is a curious compound of practical experience and superstition. Although a strong ferment is working today in the villages, and particularly among the youth, fundamental advances in culture must await the maturing of a new generation.

In spite of the low standard of living and the primitive character of the village culture, however, the people in those parts of the Soviet Union through which I traveled made an extremely favorable impression. I am referring here not to their behavior but to their qualities as members of the human race. They seemed to come from an extraordinarily sturdy stock. In physical appearance, at least to the casual observer, they resemble the people of the United States. No doubt the anthropologist would say that on the average they are somewhat broader of head and shorter of stature than my countrymen. He would perhaps also say that high cheek-bones and the so-called Slavic nose are more common among them. But as the traveler views a regiment of Soviet soldiers with their clean-shaven faces and well-fitting uniforms he would have difficulty in distinguishing them, except by their dress, their language, and perhaps their ideas, from a regiment of Ameri-

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can soldiers. Although many racial strains from east, west, north, and south have mingled on the Russian plains, yet everywhere except in the extreme south in the region of the Black Sea a moderately blond type seems to prevail. Everywhere blue and gray eyes are predominant. And in the north above Moscow an extreme blond type is very common.

It was the children in particular, however, who impressed me. I was struck by their beauty as well as their agility of mind and body. Whether I encountered them along the road or in the classrooms of the schools they always exhibited an insatiable thirst for knowledge about the great world lying beyond their range of experience. The fact that they were real children with the surplus of energy normally accompanying childhood is indicated by their predilection for throwing stones at automobiles, to which I have already referred. Moreover, even in the most backward villages and amid the most sordid physical surroundings there would always be some children of really surpassing beauty. Again and again, as I saw these children racing out to the roadside to catch a glimpse of the car, I thought of the latent powers which a rational system of nurture and education would bring to full fruition. The history of the

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Russian people shows that they are capable of producing the very first ranks of genius.

The vastness of the country and its material resources requires no comment. For the most part my former impressions, which are shared by all mankind, were merely re-enforced. An American accustomed to the wide reaches of his own land, on crossing the frontier into Soviet Russia breathes a sigh of intense relief—one-sixth of the land surface of the earth lies before him. As the motorist travels week after week through this country he begins to feel himself dwarfed by its immensity and swallowed up in its endless spaces. He also is gradually overwhelmed with the sense that the rest of the world is almost inconceivably remote and unsubstantial. And then, as he contemplates the resources of field and river and forest and mine, the thought occurs to him that if ever there was a country fitted to conduct a gigantic experiment in the reconstruction of human society, that country is the Soviet Union. So great is its extent and so varied are its resources that it is capable of developing the most complex civilization within its own borders.

In one respect, however, the endowment which Nature has bestowed upon this country quite exceeded my expectations. I refer to the beauties of the landscape. According to the picture which

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I had obtained from reference books and which I had always carried with me, the European division of the Soviet Union was one vast, unbroken, monotonous plain over whose even surface sluggish rivers meandered lazily towards the sea. While I saw no really high ridges or deep valleys north of the Crimea and the Caucasus, I have been forced radically to revise this simple picture. Throughout my journey I kept a sharp lookout for the great plain of legend, and although on several occasions I thought I had found it, my search continued in vain to the very end of my journey. Not seeing it between Leningrad and Moscow, I expected to encounter it on the way to Nizhni Novgorod; not finding it there, I was sure that it would open out before me as I proceeded through Kursk and Kharkov to Rostov and the Black Sea; and again being disappointed I argued that it must be further to the west in the neighborhood of Kiev, and that I would traverse it on the road north from Odessa. Apparently, since so many trustworthy observers have seen it, since indeed it is a central theme in the Russian tradition, I can only surmise what has become of it. Perhaps it is to the east in the valley of the Volga, or perhaps it is to the north above Yaroslav, or perhaps again following the Revolution it has retreated beyond the Urals. There is even

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the possibility that it has already been abolished as a part of the Five-Year Plan. At any rate nowhere in the course of my travels did I see a flat monotonous plain that I could not cross in half a day's driving.

The thing that particularly impressed me about the landscape, however, was its beauty. Between Leningrad and Moscow I passed through some of the most attractive country that I have ever had the good fortune of seeing. In just what its charm consisted, I have had great difficulty in deciding. I recall now that the low flat coast of the Baltic Sea on which the former capital rests was gradually transformed into a gently undulating surface with an occasional more conspicuous eminence; that the landscape was broken by numerous streams, rivers, and ponds; that dark forests of fir and spruce were always within the limits of the horizon; and that here and there amid these natural surroundings nestled the villages and cities of the Russian Slav. Possibly it was the July atmosphere of the North through which these physical features were viewed that created the illusion of a world enchanted. Or it may have been the touch of mystery which the silent and somber forests added to the scene. But whatever the underlying causes I shall never forget the extraordinary delicacy of the coloring of the sky or the

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sense of everlasting power which the entire landscape conveyed. I remember particularly the scene near old Novgorod as, through the rays of the setting sun, I gazed upon the golden towers and time-worn walls of this ancient center of Slavic civilization. From east to west the sky was suffused with colors of indescribable beauty—colors so soft in tone and exquisite in texture that one wondered whether they were not the pure creations of the soul. And again I think of the light-green and white dome of the Greek church rising above the purple forest in the distance, as a sentinel watching guard over a peasant village below or as a beacon guiding the wayfarer on his journey. Such pictures greet the eye of the traveler not only between Leningrad and Moscow, but also between Moscow and Nizhni Novgorod, between Moscow and Kiev, and wherever there are forests of fir and spruce.

The country to the south of Moscow on the way to Kharkov is much less attractive than the regions of the north. Forests become more and more rare until by the time the traveler reaches Kursk they have disappeared altogether. The rolling quality of the land, however, seems to continue indefinitely, broken here and there by vast flat areas. On many occasions as I struck these areas I was certain that I had at last entered upon the

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great featureless plain of Russia, but sooner or later it would be broken by an uneven terrain which at times would take the appearance of enormous swells or billows in the land. I noticed, moreover, that whenever I followed the railroad, as I did between Kharkov and Dniepropetrovsk and between Mariupol and Stalin, I seemed to encounter somewhat more even surfaces. Perhaps, since the railroad naturally seeks out the gentler grades, this is the reason that the ordinary traveler in Russia gains the impression that hills and lowlands are wholly absent. Near the Black Sea, to be sure, there are very extensive areas which appear as flat as a table. Thus, while the land between Kursk and Rostov lacks the charm of the north, there is much less of monotony than the uninitiated supposes. There is even a certain grandeur in the landscape conveyed by the impression that giants have been at work here. At present, however, the dust of the roads and the primitive quality of the material culture detract somewhat from the joys of travel.

If the country between Moscow on the one hand, and the Crimea and the Caucasus on the other is lacking in natural beauty, the motorist is certain to find ample compensation for weeks of monotony and discomfort in this great southern region of water, forest, and mountain—the nat-

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ural playground of both the old and the new Russia. My first view of this justly celebrated land burst upon me as I topped a ridge between Melitopol and Berdyansk. Immediately under my eyes were the light blue waters of the Sea of Azov which harmonized so completely with the color of the sky that I had difficulty in locating the horizon.

Many days later, as I was following the north bank of the Kuban River a short distance below Krasnodar, I experienced a vague feeling of being in the presence of some overpowering force. Looking towards the south I saw towering above me in the distance the long range of the Caucasus. The entire scene was perfect. In the immediate foreground were the swift-flowing waters and grass-covered flood plain of the Kuban. Then this great pastureland, dotted here and there with patches of forest and herds of grazing cattle, was gradually lifted into folds which, growing ever more rugged in outline, were soon lost in the first foot-hills of the range. Thereafter ridge was piled upon ridge and eminence upon eminence until the peaks of the Caucasus itself stood sharply revealed against the sky. And because of the great distance and perhaps because of some quality of the atmosphere, there was a softness in the coloring and a majestic simplicity in the lines of the

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mountains that gave an impression of timeless grandeur. I should like to describe in detail the beauties of the road over that range of mountains to Novorossisk and of the road on to Tuapse; but space only permits me to say that they equal, if they do not surpass, the beauties of northern New England at their best. Indeed the trip to Tuapse was, I am sure, the most beautiful trip of its kind that I have ever taken. For a whole day I drove through forest-clad mountains going up and down over an endless succession of ridges, winding in and out on a road that had found every weakness in Nature's armor, and always playing a game of hide and seek with the dark purple waters of the Black Sea.

I should also like to say something about the broad expanse of the Caucasian steppe, about the rugged coast of the Crimea, about Kiev, the ancient capital of the Ukraine and the most beautiful city of the Union, perched high on the cliffs above the Dnieper, and about the road from Kiev back to Moscow which was surrounded by all the beauties found in the north. But I have already dwelt too long on this particular theme. The interested motorist should see these things with his own eyes.

CHAPTER IX

The New Social Order

MUCH of what I have said in the foregoing pages reveals the growth of a new social order in the Soviet Union. The question, however, is of such crucial importance that it should be made the subject of explicit attention. One of the major objects of my journey was to discover, as best I could in the regions traversed, whether the changes under way went beyond the modification of political forms and involved the actual transformation and renewal of the underlying structure of society. I was of course familiar with the slogans of the revolution and the ambitious plans of the Soviet leaders. What I did not know was the degree to which these slogans and plans had taken vital root in the social soil. In a word, I wanted to see whether a new society was really in the process of creation. While my brief journey through a few regions of the Union hardly qualifies me to speak with authority, I shall nevertheless endeavor to report those things which I saw in August and September of 1929.

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From the standpoint of making observations of this character my visit was peculiarly well-timed. The government had just launched in October of the preceding year the famous Five-Year Plan of economic construction. This plan, which provides for a balanced development of the economy of the entire country through a period of five years, is without precedent in history and outlines the most gigantic program of construction ever contemplated by any people. A single glance at the map of the Union on which are represented by more than fifty different graphical devices the major elements embraced by the plan is sufficient to carry conviction of the truth of this statement. But as to whether such a bold adventure in social planning can be successful is a query which must be in the mind of everyone who is familiar with its provisions. Consequently, as I pursued my way along the roads of Soviet Russia, I endeavored to gather evidence on this point. I kept a sharp lookout for signs of new construction and constantly questioned persons of all callings and ages regarding the nature and probable success of the Five-Year Plan. In my account here, however, while giving much attention to this project, I shall not neglect the wider setting in which the new social order is developing. The account, moreover, will be divided into two divisions: the one dealing pri-

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marily with material and economic and the other with human and social factors.

On the material and economic side the most striking phenomenon which greets the eye of the traveler is the enormous amount of building which is going on everywhere. In the industrial regions a factory, an electric station, or even an entire community under construction is a most common sight. To the northeast of Moscow on the road to Vladimir I saw the new mills of the textile industry, near Nizhni Novgorod I saw the ground being cleared for the erection of the Ford automobile factory, at Dnieprostroy I saw ten thousand men engaged in damming the Dnieper River, in the Don Basin I saw a whole region literally teeming with building activity, not far from Shterovka I saw a huge coal-burning electric station already partly completed, in Rostov I saw a modern factory of agricultural machinery with its score of separate units about to begin work, at Tuapse I saw a great new plant for the refining of oil, and in many other places I saw the material structure of the new industrial system rapidly taking form. Moreover, old establishments everywhere were enlarging or preparing to enlarge their facilities; and I could have seen but the smallest fraction of the total construction program of the Union.

Although I had been assured in Moscow that

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much was being done, I was utterly unprepared for what I saw. Indeed I am certain that even the ordinary Soviet citizen has a totally inadequate idea of what is going on in the Union. It seems impossible that a country which a few years ago was on the verge of starvation and which has been refused credits in the money markets of the world could find the economic surplus for such a vast program of industrial construction. Even the most sluggish mind must be moved by the contemplation of present achievement; and if existing plans are fulfilled the accomplishment must take high rank among the heroic labors of mankind. In order to give some concrete support to these generalizations I shall describe very briefly what I saw at Dnieprostroy and in the Don Basin.

At Kichkas on the Dnieper, a point approximately ninety kilometers below Dniepropetrovsk, where the river enters a relatively narrow channel between high cliffs, the largest hydro-electric plant in the world is under construction. Conceived by a Russian engineer and directed through the collaboration of American and Russian technicians, this project is scheduled to be completed in 1934. Today, as one stands on the eastern bank and surveys the vast construction going on below him, if he will raise the level of his gaze, he will see

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above him on a tall standard these English words: *Top of Dam*. That the great dam when completed will stand at this level and unite the two sides of the channel almost passes belief. It will rise two hundred feet above its rock foundations, will extend in a great arc five thousand feet in length across the river, and will contain one million five hundred thousand cubic yards of concrete. At the time of ultimate installation the station will have a capacity of seven hundred and fifty thousand horse power and an annual output of two billion five hundred million kilowatt hours of electrical energy. And, in the words of the official prospectus, Dnieprostroy will become the center of a vast super-power system for the support of existing and future industries within a radius of three hundred miles. Such an area, supplied with low cost electric power and attractive rail and water transportation, should eventually be the home of an industrial population of approximately eight million people. The use of hydro-electric power from this station will mean the annual saving of about three million tons of coal, or the coal carried by a standard freight train seven-hundred miles long. And Dnieprostroy will not be the only great electric station in the Union. Tens of stations are now under construction, and the Soviet leaders are already making plans to harness one of the rivers

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of Siberia by means of a dam much larger than that now building on the Dnieper.

As the traveler approaches Stalin from the south he sees the desolate steppe broken in the distance by great chimneys belching forth the black smoke of the metallurgical industry. Moreover, as he crosses the brow of some ridge he comes to the sudden realization that he has been precipitated, as it were, into a huge industrial region which but a few moments before had been hidden behind the uneven surface of the prairie. On every hand he sees factories rising before him and, scattered among them, the conical dumps of the coal mines. He then knows that he is looking into the heart of the far-famed Don Basin, an area which because of its great resources of coal and iron was destined by Nature to become an important center of heavy industry. And now the motorist begins to look for Stalin, the brightest, or perhaps we should say, the darkest star in a veritable constellation of growing towns and cities. At last, after much inquiry and after making many mistakes of identity he arrives at Stalin itself—a city as raw and dirty and virile as Chicago or some other city of the American West must have been two generations ago. Everywhere there is movement and construction. Old factories are being enlarged, new factories are being built,

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streets are being paved, a state bank is under construction, and, very fittingly, an institute of mines is being added to the educational agencies of the community. Then as the motorist leaves Stalin and turns eastward towards Shterovka he passes through a succession of mining and industrial centers, some of which have been constructed *de novo* within the past four or five years. I recall particularly, as on one occasion I crossed the brow of a ridge, seeing spread out before me in the valley below a beautiful white city. On making inquiry I learned that the city had just been completed and that, presumably because it had been constructed according to the American pattern, had been given the name Americanka. I must confess, however, that although I have traveled widely in the mining regions of the United States I have never yet seen a city like this one beyond the borders of the Don Basin.

In the sphere of agriculture the material construction is much less impressive. A great deal of farm machinery is of course being introduced, but the country is so vast that, except in certain limited and specially favored areas, it is swallowed up without leaving more than a trace. There were, however, many projects looking towards the fundamental reorganization of agriculture which I saw and which should be reported here. Indeed

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at the time of my journey the villages were in a state of ferment. The program for the collectivization of agriculture, which occupies a central position in the Five-Year Plan, had already been well launched. Anyone traveling through rural Russia therefore, in almost any region which I visited, could not fail to hear reports from time to time of this or that new venture. He would be told that a communal farm was located here and a large state farm there. He might even find whole regions grappling earnestly with the problem of the relative merits of collectivistic and individualistic economy, or he might by chance, as I did on several occasions, pass the night with a peasant who was debating this question with all the energy of his soul.

In general these new agricultural projects fall under two categories. In the first place, there is the farm commune which represents a genuine effort to introduce the principles of collectivism into the sphere of agriculture. Peasants come together and, under some sort of arrangement, pool their abilities and resources, their land, their tools, and their livestock. In the second place, there is the state farm which is characterized by an attempt to apply to agriculture the methods of organization and administration developed in the factory. The project is launched by the gov-

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ernment and is under the management of central authorities. Lands are secured, machinery purchased, supplies bought, and workmen employed in much the same way that these things are done in the establishment and conduct of an industrial enterprise. While my observations were very limited I visited a considerable number of these interesting experiments. I shall first describe two communes, Kraseevy Mech about fifty-five miles below Tula and the Finnish-American Commune some ninety miles southeast of Rostov, and then I shall close the report on agriculture with a reference to Gigant—that huge grain factory on the Caucasian steppe.

Kraseevy Mech seems to be one of the oldest and most successful farm communes in the Soviet Union. The story of its organization, its early struggle, and its final triumph is full of interest. When established in 1921 it could boast but 65 members, 230 acres of land, three horses, two cows, a few simple tools, and the buildings of an old estate. On August 1, 1929, it embraced 640 members, 4860 acres of land, 102 horses, 116 cattle, 122 hogs, ten mowing machines, four tractors, one combine, one binder, and one threshing machine. It also had 15 miles of chaussé under construction and had contracted for the delivery of two trucks in September. The sale of grain,

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which may be regarded as one measure of prosperity, has risen from only 5000 poods in 1926 to 150,000 poods in 1929. Among the institutions of the commune at the same time were a nursery, two red corners, several primary schools, a secondary school under construction, three schools for illiterates, courses of political readings, a course for tractorists, an ordinary hospital, a veterinary hospital, a moving picture theater, a people's home, a flour mill, a starch factory, shops of different kinds, and Pioneer, Komsomol, and Party organizations. Obviously here is a type of rural economy that has little in common with the traditional village. Moreover, within the next five years the leaders of this enterprise were expecting to bring into the commune the entire surrounding region with its 62,000 people and its 248,400 acres of land. In view of the extraordinary progress made during the preceding years and the temper of the population in the neighboring villages the realization of this very ambitious plan seemed entirely possible.

Kraseevy Mech, however, is not a pure commune. Although the profits of the farm are divided equally among men, women, and children, every member in addition receives wages for his labor. Moreover, workers are not paid a flat rate. On the contrary they are classified accord-

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ing to their qualifications into seventeen different categories with compensation ranging from twenty-four to seventy-six rubles for one hundred and ninety-two hours of labor. Anyone in the region may become a member, provided he is willing to place his property at the disposal of the commune. No one is refused admission because of either poverty or riches. Recently a widow without goods and with nine young children joined the enterprise. A member may also leave at his own desire and take his property with him. When a person enters the commune he is credited with the value of his contribution in land and capital and, if after a time he becomes dissatisfied and leaves, he receives this value in rubles plus interest at five per cent. All decisions affecting the life of the commune are reached through assemblies composed of all members over eighteen years of age. The management is responsible to and elected by this same membership. The director impressed me very favorably. He is not only a man of action, but also something of a philosopher. Because of his opposition to pure communism during the first years of the revolution, on the grounds that it is impracticable until the psychology of the peasant is changed, he was regarded as a dangerous character by the local authorities and imprisoned for eight months.

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Later his statement of principles was definitely approved by the government. He also bears the distinction of having been exiled to Archangel for seven years under the old régime for participation in the uprisings of 1905.

Of unusual interest to the American visitor is the Finnish-American commune on the wind-swept steppe of the Caucasus approximately ninety miles southeast of Rostov. Here in 1922 came a band of American Finns, mostly from Seattle, Washington, in search of land and freedom. From the Soviet government they received a tract of thirteen thousand five hundred acres as it was fashioned by the hand of Nature. There were neither buildings nor cultivated fields—only the wild grass and the untamed animals of the steppe. The first years were consequently years of great hardship and suffering. The dwellings were inadequate, the climate was strange, and malaria invaded the little colony. Moreover, because of insufficient machinery a goodly portion of an abundant harvest could not be reaped. Today the worst years are over and the commune seems to be on the road to prosperity. The members have found time to erect the necessary buildings, they have secured sufficient capital to purchase the indispensable machinery, and they have been able to devote some thought to the development of the cultural side

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of life. With a total membership of approximately two hundred and fifty men, women, and children, the commune now possesses, in addition to its thirteen thousand five hundred acres of primitive steppe, an office building, numerous dwellings, sheds for machinery, a wind-mill, a woodwork shop, a machine shop, a brick kiln, a cattle barn, and many tractors, binders, plows, and other forms of modern farm implements. In 1928 the colony had a clear profit over all costs, including such items as labor, food, clothing, shelter, and supplies, of 80,000 rubles. A similar profit was made in 1929; and a good crop, which of course is always expected, would bring in 250,000 rubles.

In its internal arrangements this colony approaches somewhat more nearly to the ideal commune than does Kraseevy Mech. In the first days of its existence no wages whatsoever were paid. From each according to his strength and to each according to his needs was the principle about which life was organized. But after passing through the period of privation certain changes were introduced. Today every worker, regardless of age, sex, or qualification, receives the same wage—15 kopecks an hour. Children under eighteen years of age, however, are not expected to engage in regular labor. In addition to this basic wage the adult, if he works, receives food and

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lodging and two weeks vacation annually. If he does not work, and this is his privilege, he must pay for his meals. Government is in the hands of a commission of seven persons who are chosen at a general meeting of the commune. At the head of this body is a director who is also elected by the total voting membership. Persons may leave the colony if they choose; and during the seven years of its existence it has lost approximately one hundred and fifty members in this way. Among the latter are some who have returned to America. The secretary of the commune stated that those who place a premium on clothes, moving pictures, and the material comforts of life have tended to go back to the United States, while those who love freedom and prize self-respect have generally remained with the commune.

Not far from the Finnish-American commune is the most colossal experiment in large scale agriculture ever attempted. This enterprise, rightly named Gigant, embraces about 350,000 acres of land, of which approximately 325,000 are suited to agriculture. The vastness of this area can be grasped only by wandering over it. While visiting the farm I drove almost forty miles in one direction without crossing its borders. In 1927 there was nothing here but primitive steppe; during the past year 160,000 acres were under cultivation;

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and in 1930 this will be raised to 270,000 acres. The total area is so large that it must be divided into smaller units and farmed by colonies of workers. A single colony can take care of only five or six hundred acres. I saw several of these colonies living in temporary shelters which could be moved from place to place. They were literally colonies on wheels. And of course this cultivation of land by modern methods requires a tremendous amount of machinery. Thus, according to the inventory taken at the time of harvest in 1929, there were 374 tractors, 25 combines, 190 binders, 31 threshing machines, 259 grain wagons, and 170 sheaf wagons. After the work is over in the autumn and the machinery has been brought together at headquarters for the winter, the observer feels that he is in the storage plant of a great factory for the manufacture of all kinds of agricultural implements. To see all of these machines in rural Russia fills one with a sense of profound incongruity.

Gigant is classed as a grain factory. It is not a commune in any sense of the word. It is organized and directed by the grain trust which has headquarters in Moscow and is conducted according to the same principles as any other great factory. The director is appointed from Moscow and laborers are employed when they are needed at

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the wages necessary to secure them. The number of workers required varies, of course, with the season and ranges all the way from as low as eighteen hundred to as high as seven thousand. They are all expected to belong to the appropriate professional unions and through these organizations to make the voice of labor heard in the management of the enterprise. Plans have been drawn for the development of various cultural institutions, such as nurseries, schools, clubs, libraries, moving picture theaters, and so on. The major function of Gigant and the numerous other grain factories now being organized in the Soviet Union is to raise grain for export and thus to secure a trade balance with which to purchase from abroad the machinery required by the great program of industrial construction. Although the day may be too early to pass judgment on these undertakings, Gigant at least seems to be an experiment of very great possibilities.

One of the most impressive facts regarding the building of the new economic order is that attention is not confined by any means to factories, machinery, and the means of production. When a new industrial enterprise is launched, apparently as much attention is devoted to the living conditions of the workers as to the plant itself. Thus,

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whether the observer visits the new textile mills of the north, the great hydro-electric station at Dnieprostroy, the new mining regions in the Don Basin, the coal-burning electric station near Shterovka, the factory for agricultural machinery at Rostov, or the oil fields of Baku, everywhere he will see new homes, baths, clubs, and various cultural agencies provided for the workers. And these buildings seem to be substantially constructed, hygienic, and pleasing to the eye.

There is also much construction going on which is not directly related to industry. Thus in Khar-kov, on an eminence which dominates the city, a great building for housing the organs of government has just been completed. With its symmetrical pattern, its straight lines, its steel-gray walls, and its union of grace and strength, it is the best representation of the new revolutionary architecture that I have seen in Soviet Russia. This same city is laying plans for the construction of the largest theater in Europe. In Rostov a modern water system has just been installed, a large polyclinic for the workers is almost ready for work, and a huge hospital with seventeen units is nearing completion. In many other cities similar projects have been either proposed or launched. Obviously, in its outward form, the new social

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order is revealing itself not only in a vast program of economic construction, but also in the creation of those material facilities necessary for the general protection and enrichment of life.

The traveler, however, does not see the new social order appearing merely in material construction and the reorganization of institutions. If he were to close his eyes to all of these things and confine his attention solely to the people themselves, he would know that a new society is in the making. No one traveling in the Union could fail to be impressed by the quality of the Soviet leadership, the social position of the workers, the active ferment of ideas, the vitality of the younger generation, and the development of new attitudes towards life.

Persons in positions of leadership, and I refer here not merely to members of the Party but rather to all who are participating actively in the building of the new social order, seem on the whole to possess in extreme measure the qualities of courage and devotion. While of course there are many individual exceptions, the heads of the soviets, the managers of factories, the organizers of new forms of agricultural economy, the directors of cultural institutions, and the immediate representatives of the communist movement, as

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I remember them, convey a most favorable impression. Most of them are young men and women; and they feel themselves engaged in a work of sublime importance. Likewise, although they are generally inclined to view the whole world through Marxian glasses, yet they are extremely well-informed with regard to the nature of society. Moreover, they seem to know their own minds, as have the champions of great causes throughout human history. They exhibit little of that hesitation which comes from doubt and uncertainty. They do not appear to feel, as do the more intelligent of my own countrymen, that they face an unknown future to which they must adapt themselves. Rather do the youthful builders of Soviet Russia contend that such an attitude towards life is a confession of weakness and that the strong mold the future to their will. Thus through the Five-Year Plan and other plans to follow they *know* that they can fashion society according to their own desires. Made optimistic by genuine achievements and by a knowledge of the matchless resources of their country, they are certain that time itself works on their side.

What I have said about the individuals occupying positions of leadership may be applied with appropriate modification to the class which rules

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the country—the workmen of the cities. To be sure, the Soviet spokesmen like to refer to their government as a government of workmen and peasants, but in this partnership, if partnership it be, the workmen constitute the active member. Undoubtedly to belong to this class in Russia to-day tends to give to the individual a strong sense of personal dignity and responsibility. The workmen know that they rule the country and take great pride in the belief that theirs is the first society in history to be so governed. There are of course many exceptions, and the motorist is certain to encounter them before he travels far. He will find disgruntled elements among the workmen in every community; he will find individuals who have never accepted the communist doctrines; he will find ardent Trotskyists who speak mournfully of the utter hopelessness of life in Russia today; and he will find persons who hear of the high wages in America and long to cross the Atlantic. But Soviet Russia is nevertheless a workers' republic. Even the standards of dress and manners which generally prevail are the standards of the laboring class.

That this rise to power has affected the mentality of the worker is everywhere apparent. Among the more boisterous and thoughtless ele-

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ment it has undoubtedly led to some crudeness of behavior and at times even to hooliganism. Of the latter, however, I saw no manifestation on my journey. What I did observe was a marked tendency on the part of the worker to behave as though he owned the country. I saw very few cases of his humbling himself before a superior. Yet more significant is the sense of responsibility which seems to be developing in the city workman. He appears to take an extraordinary interest in the affairs of his community.

I recall now a conversation which I had with an automobile mechanic as we walked along the street in Tuapse. I began by questioning him about the life of the city, and he talked with both knowledge and understanding. Indeed the ease with which he answered my questions would have done credit to a sociologist. He was thoroughly informed about the past and future development of industry, about the various cultural institutions, about educational facilities and needs, and about the nationality of the population. That he should know something concerning local industrial conditions was, of course, to be expected, but that he should be able to outline in detail the educational program and give in percentages the representation of the various nationalities in the

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city sounded very strange to my American ears. The case of this young man, however, is by no means unusual. I have seen it duplicated many times. Though not a member of the Party he was one of that large number of class-conscious proletarians who feel genuine obligations in the building of a new social order. The city workmen of Soviet Russia are, I believe, the best informed workmen in the world.

This rise to power of a new class is perhaps partly responsible for the ferment of ideas which one sees and feels everywhere in Russia, except perhaps among those members of the former privileged classes who as yet have not reconciled themselves to their diminished fortunes. In fact the Soviet Union is the scene of such a wrestling with fundamental ideas of human relationships as the world has seldom witnessed. Great social experiments are under way; civilization in practically all of its departments is at the crossroads. As a consequence discussion assumes a degree of earnestness and honesty that cannot be duplicated or even approached anywhere in America. In contemporary Russia discussion leads not merely to a readjustment of ideas but to action.

In the first peasant home in which I remained for the night, the wife and mother, an illiterate woman of perhaps thirty years of age, seemed to

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be rebelling with her whole nature against the rôle which tradition had assigned to woman. She was almost frantic over the question of the limitation of births. She already had four children and, as she looked at the exhausted frames of the older women of the village, she feared and dreaded the future. She had learned that births could be limited, but she lacked definite knowledge. On the Caucasian steppe a middle-aged peasant desired to argue with me the relative merits of collectivistic and individualistic enterprise in agriculture. His interest, moreover, was not academic, because at the time he was hesitating on the verge of entering a farm commune. His entire fortune and that of his wife and ten children were hanging in the balance. He consequently wanted to make no mistake. And so it is apparently throughout the Soviet Union. Great issues, indeed the greatest of issues, are at stake and the future is full of possibilities.

The launching of the Five-Year Plan in particular has aroused endless discussion. And the job of propagating the plan has been so thoroughly done that the communities to which some knowledge of it has not penetrated must be few indeed. In many cases I found that even children in remote and backward villages had not only heard of the plan but knew something of its provisions. On one occasion when I asked a group of children on the road

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between Moscow and Vladimir what the Five-Year Plan was, a bright youngster of perhaps twelve years replied at once that it was a plan to overtake and surpass all other countries. Then a companion added that this object was already being achieved. With such gigantic thoughts in the air only the most stupid and insensitive can remain unaffected.

Undoubtedly the greatest achievement of the Revolution is the rearing of an entire generation imbued with the ideals and loyal to the purposes of the new order. Through a whole range of cultural, educational, and propagandist agencies the Soviet leaders have sought to reach both children and adults. As a result there are now moving into positions of power young men and women of a type that was unknown in the old Russia. They are self-confident sons and daughters of the people—virile, practical-minded, and yet strongly idealistic. Two illustrations must serve to show what has been happening all over the Soviet Union during the last twelve years.

While driving from Nizhni Novgorod to Moscow I passed a young man on foot approximately seventeen kilometers east of Vladimir. Being pleased with his appearance I stopped the car and invited him to ride. He gladly consented and we proceeded on our way. We had not gone far, how-

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ever, until I told him that I was looking for a village in which to pass the night. It was then late in the afternoon. He informed me at once that his parents lived in a village a short distance back and suggested that I be his guest in his own home. I accepted with thanks, turned the car about, and proceeded to his village. There I met his father and mother—ordinary barefoot peasants who could neither read nor write. During the course of the evening he told me his story, and a most interesting story it was. When I saw him he was twenty-nine years of age and just finishing an engineering course at the University in Vladimir. Twelve years before, at the time of the revolution in 1917, he had been an ignorant and *wholly illiterate* peasant boy. He joined the Red Army and learned to read and write. He then studied on his own account and later attended a workers' faculty where he prepared for the university. Today he is not only a full-fledged engineer, but an extremely well-informed young man as well. He discussed intelligently the situation in world politics, he outlined the opposing educational policies under consideration in the Union, and he gave me one of the clearest and most impartial analyses of the Five-Year Plan that I have ever received from any source. Moreover, he could speak German and he

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was beginning a study of English. Soviet Russia is full of young men and women of this type.

In Arzamas I made the acquaintance of a young man of twenty-four who was director of a Soviet party school in that city. I was strongly attracted to him from the beginning. Indeed he belonged to that small minority in any society upon whom the gods have smiled and bestowed their richest favors. Although he had enjoyed few of those cultural advantages which the world so commonly prizes, his personal charm was irresistible. He was handsome and intelligent and socially gifted, but it was in certain qualities of character that his strength lay. There was an honesty in his blue eyes, a note of devotion in his speech, and a spirit of courage in his entire bearing that conveyed the impression of great moral strength. Although he had a keen sense of humor and was always ready for a joke, he would neither smoke nor touch liquor in any form. He had dedicated his whole soul to the building of the new social order. Nothing, I am sure, could swerve him from this course, neither friendship nor love nor even ambition. As I came to know this young man I thought how splendidly he would represent his own people in a foreign land. I therefore talked to him about coming to America to study education in Teachers

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College and suggested that he apply for a fellowship from the International Institute for this purpose. He was greatly interested. He obviously longed to see America, the country about which he had heard so much. On leaving Arzamas I told him I would write him formally from Moscow outlining the conditions under which fellowships are granted and inviting him to make definite his application. This I did a few days later. The letter which I received from him in return is such a revealing document that I wish to quote from it at length. He wrote in part as follows:

Your state and mine are fundamentally different: you have the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and we the dictatorship of the proletariat. The great aims which govern my life are the guarding of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union, the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat throughout the whole world (including America), and the struggle for the principles of communism. In the solving of any problem I am guided by these considerations.

... The work in your Institute is designed to enforce the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and to combat the ideas of communism. No capitalistic state will tolerate, far less support, institutions with contrary purposes. . . . Independent of your will, therefore, your Institute is a bourgeois institution in both aim and program. . . . Imagine to yourself what would happen if I should

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come to Teachers College. My views would be regarded as communist propaganda. As a consequence both you and I would be dismissed—you for permitting my ideas within the walls of the college and I for expressing them. The bourgeoisie will not allow the uttering of opinions which they do not share. . . . I am far from the thought that we have nothing to learn in a capitalistic university. I merely contend that, so long as the bourgeoisie remain in power, the members of the proletariat, and particularly the more advanced representatives of the proletariat, cannot study in such institutions. . . . The bourgeoisie spare no expenses in preparing their ideologists and defenders; but they will not devote funds to the equipping of their own enemy. What return could they expect from me? They might, of course, hope that I would repudiate the ideas of socialism and commit treason to communism, treason to the working class. But this could never happen. I come from a worker's family. Since the moment I became conscious of what goes on about me I have devoted myself to the cause of communism. I find the very meaning of my life in the mutual struggle with the working class for its ultimate aims. Each day re-enforces this conviction within me. For me there is no other course, and there cannot be. In our country thus think millions, and this insures our victory.

He closes his letter with the statement that he hopes to come to America sometime but that, when he does, he will come on his own funds.

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While he may be in error in his social analysis, no one can fail to admire his courage and honesty. I have had a long experience in the granting of fellowships and scholarships to both American and foreign students and I must confess that I have never known of another case of refusal of aid on such high moral grounds, or indeed on any grounds. As a rule young men and women clamor for subventions and they care but little about the sources from which the funds may come. This young man therefore seems entirely unique, but I am certain that he could be duplicated many times in Soviet Russia.

From much that I have written it is clearly apparent that new social attitudes and systems of value are appearing in the Soviet Union. Although there are many cross-currents and even squarely conflicting tendencies, all observers must agree, I think, that a new morality is emerging, that life is gradually being organized about the principle of collectivism. The welfare of society as a whole is being placed above the narrow self-interest of the individual, and every social institution is being subjected to the most searching scrutiny from the standpoint of the socialistic ideal. Many occupations, highly respected in other countries, through which men gain arbitrary power over their fellows are being compelled to play a smaller and smaller

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rôle in the economic order. Already, to persons who have been reared on the revolutionary doctrines, certain of the most esteemed practices of capitalism seem positively degrading and immoral. But the time is still too early to pass judgment on the spiritual foundations of the new society. Only after the older generation has passed completely from the stage can the permanence and the efficiency of that order be accurately measured.

CHAPTER X

The Fortunes of the Revolution

WITHOUT the shadow of a doubt the old order is gone forever. The popular psychology which tolerated, nurtured, and sustained the privileged classes under the tsar seems to have disappeared altogether. Indeed it is difficult to believe that such a state of mind ever existed outside the realm of fiction. And a new generation is rapidly approaching maturity whose members have only the faintest recollections of pre-revolutionary times. I once asked a boy of sixteen in Moscow, who was working as an apprentice in a garage housed in one of the side-buildings of what must have been a very beautiful private estate, to whom this property had belonged prior to 1917. The boy replied that he did not know; and he might very well have added that he did not care. It is not merely a question of forgetting. Life itself has moved on. The old order is rapidly being displaced in every fibre of its structure. Whenever a nail is driven or a wheel turned Soviet Russia advances just that much further on her course. Already powerful interests have be-

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come vested in the new order, and these interests grow stronger with every passing hour.

My trip of six thousand miles through the heart of Soviet Russia constitutes the clearest possible proof of the stability of the new order. With only an elementary knowledge of the language and with no companion of any kind during an important part of the journey, I was able to make my way without serious difficulty. Although life still lacks the close integration characteristic of industrial civilization, I found that everywhere the roads were being kept open and the bridges in repair. Also in proportion to the need gasoline and oil seemed to be fairly well distributed, and surprisingly competent mechanics were found wherever the automobile had penetrated. Moreover, both life and property appeared to be safe everywhere, except on the tramways of Moscow. I traversed little frequented highways at all hours of day and night, yet I never had reason for believing that either my purse or my person was in the slightest danger. In view of the apparent absence of any system of highway police and the extreme poverty of many elements of the population, this could only mean that the present order rests on stable foundations. Furthermore, I not only was not molested myself, but I even saw no

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disorder of any kind beyond a quarrel or two induced by over-indulgence in vodka.

One of the most striking results of the revolution has been an extraordinary release of energy. No one, I think, can visit Soviet Russia without being amazed at the amount and the quality of creative work which has been done during a period of twelve years. At first this energy was directed largely into political and military channels for the purpose of consolidating and guarding the first fruits of the revolution. An extremely complicated and original system of government was devised, and a new army of unquestioned efficiency and power was created. At about the same time and also in part as a protective measure there was developed the most elaborate system of education and propaganda of which the world has record. Then, having insured the safety of the revolution from the attacks of both internal and external enemies, those in general charge of this vast experiment seem to have directed the flow of energy to the more prosaic task of building the actual structure of the new social order.

Perhaps the most surprising feature of this release of energy is the orderly and comprehensive scope of its operations. Touch the question of social construction at any point and you will find that someone has been there before you. On sev-

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eral occasions I pointed out to Russian friends what seemed to me to be unobserved weaknesses in the present situation only to be told that there was already in existence a considerable body of literature on each of these subjects. Not only has nothing been overlooked from fashioning an alphabet for some primitive tribe to the formulation of the Five-Year Plan of Public Economy, but even the most gigantic undertakings have been worked out in all their bearings and to the smallest details. As an intellectual achievement the revolution has been an astounding success.

There is one point, however, at which the flow of creative energy is grievously dissipated. I refer to that administrative inefficiency and bureaucracy which manifest themselves in both the governmental and the economic machinery. During my stay of six months in Soviet Russia, and particularly during the period of the journey by automobile, the number of gray hairs in my head multiplied at an alarming rate: I can only trace them to those heart-breaking delays which I had to endure endlessly. Transactions which should have taken minutes consumed hours, and transactions which should have been handled in hours required whole days. There are two words which should be struck from the Russian language—*presently* and *tomorrow*. I realize that in America efficiency is

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often an efficiency of motion, an efficiency without purpose. This no doubt is bad; but purpose divorced from effective means of accomplishment is no better.

As I contemplate my experiences in passing the customs, in securing a license, in purchasing gasoline, or in shipping the car, I sometimes have deep misgivings regarding the future. I even fear that the success of a great social experiment may be jeopardized by wholly irrelevant considerations. In that sector of life which has been brought within the province of social administration practically nothing in Soviet Russia is done simply and quickly. Where delay is occasioned by long lines of customers, as is often the case, some defense may be offered in the name of economy. But I have been delayed terribly when, in so far as I could see, I was receiving the entire attention of the office staff. The real causes of delay seem to be an excessive use of paper, the passing of documents from clerk to clerk, defective co-ordination of departments, a complete lack of any sense of the value of time, and genuine incompetence somewhere in the staff. Today administration, which should expedite the transaction of business, seems actually to retard the flow of goods and services. If the time which people lose because of needless

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delays were devoted to productive labor, the Five-Year Plan should be completed in three years.

Another inconvenient incident of the revolutionary struggle is the scarcity of goods. The seriousness of this scarcity, however, is, I think, greatly exaggerated in foreign countries. Moreover, the various rumors which can be picked up in almost any gathering in Moscow are for the most part without foundation. While inefficiency of administration may play some small part in this matter, I am convinced that the fundamental factor at work is the demand for capital. During the five-year period from October 1928 to October 1933 the country must find sixty-five billion rubles for construction alone. Since there is no immediate likelihood that any important part of this amount can be borrowed from other countries, Soviet Russia in spite of her poverty must in some way secure the needed funds from her own savings. This means that the present must be sacrificed for the future to an unprecedented extent. In order that credit may be secured for the purchase from abroad of the indispensable machinery, every ounce of manufactured or agricultural goods that can be spared must be sent to foreign markets. As a consequence there will probably be some shortage of goods until important units in the new industrial system begin to function. Even then

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the shortage may continue if the government decides that a further and rapid elaboration of the means of production is desirable. The various economic *crises* which are reported in the foreign press from time to time must be interpreted in their natural setting. To a degree they are consciously induced as a by-product of the program for the intensive industrial development of the country. Soviet Russia is practically prohibiting all unnecessary consumption in the interests of future prosperity and economic independence. She hopes that the rationing of food and other goods today will mean mills and factories and electric stations tomorrow. The choice is a difficult one to make, but no one can say that she has chosen the less heroic course.

Because of this decision to sacrifice the present for the future Soviet Russia is at the same time a land of deep pessimism and radiant optimism. Great numbers of people are undoubtedly discontented. This perpetual postponement of the satisfactions of life has caused many to lose faith in the promises of the revolution. Thus, having given up hope they see nothing in the future except privation and an ever-recurring urge to economize. Often, as I have suggested to these discontented ones that life will probably be better, they have replied with the one word, *when?* Knowing

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nothing at first hand of the gigantic work of construction which is under way, they doubt its very existence and argue that Russia is destined to remain forever a land of poverty and privation. Then there are those whose courage and zeal have been exhausted. The fact that the sun of material prosperity will shine upon the Union at some distant date, while granted, leaves them cold. Seeing the shadows of age beginning to creep upon them they despair of sharing in the prosperity themselves. I have talked with persons in middle life, whose youth was consumed in the fires of war and revolution, who feel that they have never lived, that they are members of an unfortunate generation, that they have been cheated by the fates. They argue that progress should be made more slowly and that they are being asked to sacrifice too much for the future. They ask wistfully why their children should receive everything and they nothing.

On the other hand, among those who have thrown themselves zealously into the vast program of creation and construction, optimism often passes the bounds of rationality. Even in America, a land which to a peculiar degree has bred the optimistic temper, I have never seen its equal. These citizens of the Soviet Union are so certain of their social theory and so confident of their

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strength that nothing seems impossible. Even under conditions of extreme hardship and material poverty they are sustained by a boundless faith in the future. And since they are devoting themselves joyfully to the achievement of a purpose which they regard as of transcendent worth they view themselves as among the most fortunate of men. According to their earnest belief, they are engaged in the building of a better, a mightier, a more just, and a more beautiful civilization than the world has yet seen. They are sure that they stand at one of the critical points of history and that the eyes of future generations rest anxiously and lovingly upon them.

Both pessimists and optimists, however, dream of an era of material plenty. Probably because of the centuries of poverty which they have endured, the Russian people seem to possess an almost unnatural craving for the good things of this world. And since these things have come in largest measure to those nations which have brought science into the service of industry, the revolutionary faith has fallen under the magic spell of those twin offspring of science—mechanization and rationalization. On its economic side the new order will be realized through the introduction of machines and the careful ordering of the processes of production. Everything from the peeling of

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potatoes to the construction of automobiles is to be mechanized and rationalized.

No phase of Soviet life seems to have escaped the embrace of this particular enthusiasm. My Ford car attracted attention everywhere because of its mechanical perfection. I have seen university professors literally burst into laughter of utter satisfaction on seeing the electric-driven device which clears the windshield begin to operate. Peasants will pat with a loving caress the motor of a tractor; children in the schools write endless themes on the rôle of the machine in the social order of the future; an exhibit of the work of the Pioneers is certain to include a large section devoted to mechanical inventions and contrivances fashioned by children; even the theatre and the arts are made to serve as vehicles of the same propaganda; and as one views the new architecture, examines the illustrations in the newspapers, or notes the form of revolutionary placards and banners, one always feels oneself in the presence of factories, machines, and technology. The present vogue of America in Russia is no doubt due in part to the fact that to a peculiar degree she exemplifies the spirit of science in industry. And at this point certainly, despite the large differences in social ideology which divide them, these two great republics are walking in harmonious step.

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The future of the revolutionary movement is of course full of uncertainty. This is due largely to the fact that the potential power of each of the more important factors in the situation cannot be gauged. Certain factors which today seem destined to play a crucial rôle will be found, when the account is finally rendered, to have been greatly over-rated; while others which are now scarcely discernible will prove to have been decisive. This is of course one of the platitudes of history; but to apply it to a given situation is difficult. I venture the suggestion, however, that one factor which has been weighted too heavily in the calculations is the peasant. In America, as in the West generally, there has been a tendency to argue that, because there are so many of him, he will eventually determine the fate of the revolution. This argument is quite unsound, I think, because it disregards the dynamic quality in social life. It would have been just as reasonable in 1850 in the United States to argue that the farmer would determine the course of American civilization during the immediately succeeding generations. As a matter of fact, in spite of his great numerical superiority he has been waging a losing fight with the forces of industrialism ever since. This question, as it touches the situation in Soviet Russia, is so important that I wish to examine it in some detail.

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In my judgment the peasant, at least as he is known today, will not play a decisive and positive rôle in shaping the course of the revolutionary movement. My reasons for taking this position are as follows: In the first place, for more than twelve years the city proletariat has held the reins of power and during this time has thoroughly consolidated its position. Working through the Communist Party, one of the most powerful political instruments ever fashioned by the hand of man, it has assumed a position of undisputed leadership in the Union and has gained control over the instrumentalities of government, the police and military forces, the systems of transportation and communication, the agencies of education and propaganda, and even the flow of goods and the allocation of capital. In the second place, the peasants, though numerically strong, are tactically and strategically weak. They live in thousands of villages scattered over a territory of inconceivable vastness; they lack both the technique and the experience of collective action; and they possess no responsible leadership. In the third place, the peasants are divided among themselves. While one hears much grumbling in the villages about the hard conditions of life, the great majority, I am convinced, feel that their lot has been improved by the revolution. And the younger

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generation is often inspired by visions of a rural Russia made strong and prosperous through the introduction of modern agricultural science and technology. The rich peasants, who of course can have no affection for the present government and would welcome a change, constitute but a small fraction of the total. In the fourth place, even if the peasants were united, their cultural level is so low that they would be utterly helpless in a direct struggle with the city proletariat. They might be able to sabotage the government, but they are totally unequipped in every way to go beyond the limits of passive resistance. It would be as reasonable to expect the Chinese in their present condition to wage a successful war against a modern industrial nation. In the fifth place, the proportional strength of the peasants in the general population is certain to decrease. The current program of industrialization, if carried through to completion, will add greatly to the power of those classes which may be counted upon to support the ideals and purposes of the revolution. Every time a new factory is built in Soviet Russia the case of the peasant grows weaker. In the sixth place, the government is not even permitting the peasant of individualistic tradition to remain in undisputed possession of the land. Through the organization of communes and state farms and machine-tractor

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stations the inherited form of rural economy is being radically and fundamentally altered. And this drive towards collectivization is greatly facilitated by the extremely primitive methods and tools of the village. The struggle between individualism and collectivism is therefore not being waged on even terms. The Russian peasant, being an extraordinarily weak and ill-equipped champion of private enterprise, seems altogether likely to lose the battle with the Communists. Already the program of the Five-Year Plan has been left far behind and responsible leaders are confidently predicting that practically the whole of agriculture will be brought under some form of collective management within two years. The children, moreover, seem to be joining the opposition. They long for the superior social, cultural, and recreational facilities furnished by the commune. Thus the peasant today is clearly on the defensive and, I think, greatly bewildered. Although he must see his world rapidly falling into dissolution about him, he can only engage in futile grumble and protest. The momentum of the revolutionary forces is altogether too powerful to be withstood.

Another factor in the situation which is over-weighted in the calculations is the Greek Orthodox Church. Of course what the distant future may hold for some form of Christianity cannot be fore-

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told. Out of the fires of opposition and suffering may come eventually a purified and living church, but this is the wildest sort of speculation. One might with much more reason argue that Christianity will give way to a religion of communism. Today the traveler can only marvel that Orthodoxy apparently had such an insecure hold on the population. To be sure, the country has been flooded with anti-religious propaganda for more than twelve years, but this fact alone is totally insufficient to account for the obvious and widespread apathy of the population towards the fate of the Church. The cause must be much deeper: it must lie in the union of that Church with autocracy and in its failure genuinely and intelligently to serve the great masses of the people. It is no accident that the revolutionary movement in Russia developed wholly outside the Church.

During the course of my journey I witnessed services in many churches. As a rule the number of worshipers present was small and composed almost altogether of old men and women. I recall entering a church one Sunday morning in a village far removed from the main highways. Here, as in the larger population centers, I was struck by the almost total absence of young people. On returning to the car, which I had parked by the side of the road, I found that the usual group of children

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had gathered about. When I asked them why they were not in church, a youngster of perhaps ten years of age answered quickly, "There is no God." And this answer brought forth no dissenting comments. Again in a famous monastery in Moscow a girl of six, observing a nun give the sign of the cross as she passed a church, remarked to her mother: "The fool, why does she cross herself? Doesn't she know there is no God? And besides, all of the church bells have been taken down."

This denial of God, militantly expressed in the growing Society of Atheists, seems to be spreading rapidly through the population and particularly among the younger generation. Moreover, what I saw of the priests of the Orthodox Church convinced me that they are scarcely fit adversaries for those able men who today are shaping the policies of the Soviet government. The very fact that they seem to believe much of the superstition which they pass on to the peasants, while elevating their moral position, reveals how poorly the cause of religion is served. The ordinary priest can in no sense be regarded as an educated man. The entire field of modern science is closed to him, and the world in which he lives is seen through the eyes of ignorance. It is not surprising therefore that the Commissariat of Education should classify, as anti-religious, books on agronomy and animal

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breeding intended for the village. And I do not remember ever seeing a *young* priest in Soviet Russia. The Orthodox Church can therefore hardly be expected to play a decisive rôle in determining the course of the revolutionary movement.

If we except a natural cataclysm, such as drouth or famine, there are, I think, only two possible dangers to the revolution in the immediate future. The one is a foreign war and the other is a split in the Communist Party. If either of these contingencies should materialize, the building of the new social order would be placed in the most extreme jeopardy.

My trip through the Soviet Union happened to coincide with the more acute stages of the controversy with China over the Chinese Eastern Railway. While in the eventuality of conflict the Red Army would undoubtedly have made short work of any armed forces which the Chinese could have put into the field, even such a military adventure might have proved fatal. The present program of industrialization would have been halted and the moral position of the government within the Union would have been gravely impaired. As I went about the country I would ask people in all walks of life what war would mean. Almost invariably I received the answer that it would be disastrous. By this they meant that the work of

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construction which is going on everywhere would be interrupted and that vital energies would be grievously dissipated. At the same time there was a readiness in many quarters, particularly among the young people, to accept war if it was forced upon the country. I am convinced, however, that Soviet Russia will go to practically any lengths to avoid military conflict before the completion of the Five-Year Plan. Thereafter it may be a different story.

The second possible danger to the revolutionary movement is a split in the Communist Party. While there is of course no reason for believing that such a split is impending, it always looms in the future as a possibility. So long as the Party remains united there is no force within the Union sufficiently powerful to challenge its decisions; but if disunity should appear at the center, then the way would be open for the play of forces which might rob the evolving order of responsible direction. This question also I have put to many persons. Among the Communists there is a general tendency to discount it on the grounds that the Party has already been tested and found capable of enduring. The case of Trotsky is always taken as proof of their contention. They very cogently argue that, if the man whose name was inseparably linked with that of Lenin, a man of the most

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extraordinary personal power, could not divide the Party, then it is very improbable that any figure will appear in the near future capable of succeeding where Trotsky failed. They maintain that internal discipline is sufficiently strong to prevail over all attempts to disrupt the organization. On the other hand, thoughtful Russians, who do not enjoy membership in the Party but who nevertheless are in sympathy with its program, have told me that in their judgment the success of the Five-Year Plan may be endangered by quarrels within the Party.

Prophecy with regard to the more distant future is of course hazardous. In spite of the fact that certain trends today appear fairly obvious, the ultimate course which the movement as a whole will take defies prediction. Even in a static society personalities are constantly changing, and a revolution always releases unexpected forces. The Communist Party, though continuing its existence for generations, may radically alter its policies and even its purposes. Such observations are also among the commonplaces of history.

The revolutionary movement, moreover, is certainly much more experimental in character than is generally believed in America. By this I mean that its formulas seem to exhibit a considerable measure of elasticity. This impression was formed

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not by discussion with the leaders in Moscow or other great population centers but rather by actually observing the new construction which is under way. The farm communes, for example, by no means follow a single pattern. Although all that I saw could be classed as collectivistic enterprises, there were the greatest differences among them. Also the Five-Year Plan, while continuing to point unswervingly in the direction of the industrialization of the country and the socialistic reconstruction of the village, has been greatly modified since it was formulated and is being modified almost daily in the light of experience. If this observation is correct, it clearly means that the revolutionary movement has much greater strength than is usually attributed to it. But it also means that the future is full of uncertainty. Even the rashest of prophets, assuming the continuation of Communist rule, would not dare to forecast the outlines of that society which will rise in the course of the century on the ruins of the former Russian Empire.

CHAPTER XI

And What Became of the Ford

THIS report may well be closed with a brief account of what became of the Ford. I found that the mere taking of an automobile into Russia threw a flood of light upon Soviet institutions. If I had made no use of the car whatsoever, I would have been more than repaid in terms of knowledge about the new order for all of the time and expense involved. To be sure, on a number of occasions I heartily wished that the machine was at the bottom of the sea and reproached myself for ever attempting to bring it into the country. Such states of mind, however, were exceedingly rare, being the product of some particularly aggravating circumstance which for the moment unsettled my temper. The automobile did require an enormous amount of attention, and, since I was greatly pressed for time, it sometimes assumed the proportions of a grievous burden. I must confess also that I was tremendously relieved when I finally succeeded in making a satisfactory disposition of the car. Since the ownership of a piece of private property in Soviet Russia seems

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to be accompanied by a succession of thrills, I shall recount not only the final transaction of sale but also the various fortunes and misfortunes that pursued me as long as the machine remained in my possession.

When I first contemplated the idea of crossing Soviet Russia in a Ford, I realized that the enterprise might be attended by some difficulties. Certain of my friends in New York suggested that considerable financial hazards might be involved. They feared first that, as a private person, I would not be allowed to take a car into the country, and then that, if by some chance I were granted this privilege, I would not be permitted to take it out. Also, alarmed by lurid tales about the confiscation of property, they even thought that the automobile might be nationalized along with the estates of the old bourgeoisie. These more irrational fears did not trouble me, but I did wonder from the very beginning how the differences between the two economic systems would be adjusted.

On looking into the matter I found that the transaction required a special permit from Moscow. Through a chance connection in New York I learned that a certain Jewish organization, engaged in the purchase and shipping of machinery to Jewish colonies in Russia, might be able to help

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me. Representatives of this organization informed me that I could purchase the car through them, that they would ship it to Leningrad as their own property, that I could use it as long as I desired, and then that they would buy it from me. They told me further, however, that, because of the hard usage to which it would be put, they could promise to give me but little for it. This seemed entirely fair to me, and I was about to conclude the arrangement when I was checked by the advice of a Russian friend who happened to be visiting Columbia University at the time. He pointed out that there was both a great demand for and a great scarcity of automobiles in the Union and that I should consequently receive a very good price for the Ford even after it had traveled for a couple of months over the Russian roads. He advised me therefore to take the car into the country without binding myself to any person or institution. I would then be in a position, he said, to sell it to whomsoever I pleased or even to take it back to America with me, in case a satisfactory sale could not be made. I decided to follow this advice. And as the event turned out, it proved to be very excellent advice indeed.

I now approached Amtorg and was assured that the whole transaction could be handled through their office. After some delay they secured

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the necessary permit from Moscow. They then agreed to purchase the car from the Ford Company and ship it directly to Russia for me. Moreover, the head of the shipping division in Amtorg told me that the entire cost of the automobile, a two-door sedan, delivered in Leningrad would not be more than \$580. He counseled me, however, to buy \$20 worth of spare parts, because they would be very difficult to obtain in the land of the Soviets. I consequently gave him a check for \$600 and went away rejoicing. This was no more than I would have had to pay a New York dealer for the car, minus the spare parts. Everything now seemed extremely simple. I would take the car into Russia, use it during the summer, and then sell it for whatever it would bring in the autumn. At the very worst the loss would not be more than a few hundred dollars. I congratulated myself even in my sleep on the ease with which a supposedly difficult problem had been solved.

On the arrival of the car in Leningrad, however, as the reader has already observed, costs began to mount. The actual cost of the car, with \$23.57 worth of spare parts, proved to be not \$600.00, but \$661.42. I discovered, moreover, that there was a fifty per cent tariff to be paid at the customs house which, according to the method of reckoning followed, came to approximately

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530 rubles. Then the charges incurred in putting the car into running order amounted to some 75 rubles more. Thus I saw the size of my investment increasing at an alarming rate.

It was the cost of repairs and materials, however, that seemed to be most difficult to control. In Leningrad I was warned by the chauffeur who towed the car from the docks to a down-town garage that the shops in Russia think nothing of charging hundreds and even thousands of rubles for automobile repairs. Although this statement proved to be somewhat exaggerated, it did contain an element of truth. Certainly the private shops charged me whatever they thought the traffic would bear. The state enterprises, on the other hand, as I have already pointed out, were very reasonable in their fees and in many instances actually extended free service to me. I shall confine the account here to my two major transactions in this sphere, the one with a private garage and the other with the Lomonosov Mechanic Institute, both in Moscow.

On the way from Leningrad to Moscow the car turned over and suffered considerable, though superficial, damages. The spokes of one wheel were injured, the left fender was badly bent, and the car was generally somewhat shaken up. On reaching Moscow I went to a private garage and

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had the car examined for repairs. The bill came to 180 rubles, or approximately 90 dollars at the legal rate of exchange. But the interesting feature of the transaction was the mode of payment.

When the mechanic told me that the cost of repairs would amount to 180 rubles, I protested stating that in America the job would be done for not more than \$25 or \$30. He replied that rubles would buy but little; and I answered that I had to pay approximately 50 cents apiece for them. He then laughingly suggested that I should secure rubles through the *black exchange* where they were being sold at the rate of six for the dollar. Although I had no dollars, I was interested in pursuing this point further just to see where it would lead. I consequently said that, being a stranger in the city, I did not know the exact location of this exchange of which he spoke, but that I would be glad to pay him \$30 for putting the car in order. At the rate which he had suggested this would amount to just 180 rubles. But he at once demurred on the grounds that he believed in supporting the government and that he would consequently be obliged to take one-half of the dollars to the state bank and receive rubles at the legal rate of exchange. He therefore said that the job was worth \$50. But when I seemed to acqui-

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esce he again hesitated saying that he did not care to engage in illegal transactions.

This mechanic, however, obviously had something on his mind. He was a fine looking young man of perhaps twenty-five years of age. It soon came out in the course of the conversation that his love affairs were not progressing as well as he desired. He was certain, moreover, that his prospects in the field of matrimony would improve if he could only secure goods of the proper texture and color for an overcoat. He said further that in Moscow he could not get just what he wanted at any price. Since I was about to leave for a three weeks' trip to western Europe, I told him that I might be able to help him. He at once became greatly interested and drove me half way across the city in his car to show me a coat of a friend which suited him exactly. So the bargain was closed. I purchased the best material I could find in Vienna, paid the necessary tariff at the border, and brought it safely to Moscow.

The last time I saw the mechanic he was wearing a pair of trousers made from the goods. He informed me that he had thus disposed of the surplus after the coat was made. He also told me that he was being regarded somewhat more favorably by members of the opposite sex, and since at the time he was accompanied by a young woman of

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undoubted attractions I could well believe him. Inadvertently therefore I may have stimulated the growth of the population of Soviet Russia and perhaps even improved the outlook for the Red Army during the next generation.

At this point I should say a word about the psychology of repression, as it manifests itself in connection with the effort of the state to control the rate of exchange of foreign currency. Thus the value of the American dollar is fixed by the government at 1.94 rubles. Owing to the low Soviet gold reserve, as well as a number of other factors, the value of the ruble in foreign money markets is far below that set by law. There has consequently grown up in Soviet Russia an illegal traffic in foreign currency. And since in recent years the dollar has come to be widely used as an international medium of exchange, attention has been concentrated on the American monetary unit. This entire situation has tended to generate attitudes toward the acquisition of dollars not unlike those which envelop the questions of sex and alcohol in the United States. Outside the strictly communist circles, which uphold the Puritan tradition in this sphere, persons seem to derive an illicit pleasure from the contemplation of dollars and the power which they represent. Moreover, suggestions of transactions in dollars are apt to call forth sly

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winks, smiles, and even bursts of laughter. Because of the condition of strain surrounding the question the crudest and simplest of witticisms is sufficient to release the flow of energy.

On my final return to Moscow on the first of October I took the car to the Lomonosov Mechanic Institute for a general overhauling. The manager of the automobile section assured me that the job would be done thoroughly and that the charges would cover merely labor and materials. As the mechanics looked the car over, however, they shook their heads after the manner of a physician who has been called to the bedside of a dying man. They went over the car inch by inch from the front to the rear bumper and found more troubles than I thought one automobile could have. I even imagined that they discovered new parts to the car which we know nothing about in America. And wherever they found a new part they usually found something wrong. The zeal with which they engaged in this expedition of exploration was sharpened by the fact that my car was the first specimen of the new type of closed Ford which had fallen into their hands. They overlooked nothing; they discovered every scratch on the car; and they asked me in sepulchral tones whether the water in the radiator had not boiled once or twice. When I was forced to admit that

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this had happened on one occasion, I felt as if I had been convicted of some criminal offense. I was therefore entirely prepared for the itemized bill when it was presented to me in the course of a couple of weeks. It amounted to 470 rubles.

There were of course numerous minor charges which had to be borne from time to time. Thus when the car arrived in Leningrad from America I left the new battery to be charged and borrowed an old battery for the trip to Moscow. The understanding of course was that the new battery would be exchanged for the old one as soon as the former was charged. I consequently had an agent go to Leningrad to carry out this transaction, but he was told that the old battery was just as good as the new one and that there was no reason for making the exchange. It was only when I sent a second agent who threatened to bring the matter to the attention of the authorities that I secured the battery. Later, when the spare parts, which should have come with the car, reached Leningrad, there was so much delay in getting them to Moscow that I dispatched an agent for them. The expenses attached to a round-trip to Leningrad from Moscow amount to 50 or 60 rubles. Then five new inner tubes cost approximately 18 rubles each. I was fortunate, however, in not having to purchase new tires for which I would have had to

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pay almost 100 rubles apiece. Even so, the total cost of the car, aside from running expenses, was not far from 3,000 rubles. Thus on my return to Moscow in October I was anxious to find a purchaser.

The general interest which the people exhibited in the automobile has already been remarked. Wherever I stopped, except in the very largest cities such as Moscow and Leningrad, people invariably gathered about to examine and admire the car. And in the villages, particularly in the more remote districts, the entire population would form a circle around us. In Valday an old woman, after looking the car over, asked me to what god I prayed in order to roll along in such fashion. On a village road below Arzamas a girl of sixteen, of whom I stopped to inquire the way, addressed me thus: "And what is this thing, little uncle? An automobile?" In Orel a young man of perhaps eighteen surveyed the car inside and out and then said that after a ride in it he would be ready to die.

I wish to point here, however, to the desire to purchase the car which manifested itself everywhere and which led to a series of interesting experiences. Within twenty-four hours after the arrival of the automobile in Leningrad I was approached by a university professor who was ready

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to buy the car unseen at practically any price I would set upon it. The workers in almost every garage at which I stopped would ask me to put a value on it, and in some cases they would implore me again and again to sell it to them. Men would approach me on the street and make definite offers of purchase. These offers ranged all the way from 2,000 up to 5,000 rubles. The maximum offer was made to me on two occasions, first in Mariupol and later in Rostov. When I explained to the man in Rostov, who was particularly anxious to make the purchase, that I would not think of selling the car before my return to Moscow, he asked me to wire him at that time and assured me that he would take the next train to Moscow. Thus, I found the country literally thirsting for automobiles. Apparently the owner of a car could fix his own price with the confident expectation that it would be secured.

This thirst for automobiles is due to a condition of artificial scarcity growing out of the government monopoly of foreign trade and the relative absence of an automobile industry within the country. The importation of cars is carefully guarded and is made subservient to the development of the general economy. The Soviet government is engaged in a huge program of construction which is requiring every ounce of the available energy and

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resources of the population. The purchase of an automobile is therefore regarded as a matter of general concern and not merely a private transaction. An individual desiring to buy a car must submit a bill of particulars. There are many persons and organizations in Soviet Russia today which are able and willing to purchase automobiles but which cannot get the desired permits. When a stray automobile like mine therefore wanders into the country all of these persons and organizations descend upon it like hungry vultures upon carrion. How my car actually fared at their hands, as well as at the hands of speculators who naturally flourish in such an atmosphere, I shall briefly relate.

The various unsolicited offers which had been made along the way led me to believe that the actual disposal of the car would be an extremely simple matter. On reaching Moscow in October I telegraphed to the man in Rostov asking him if he was still interested in the automobile. By the most rapid form of telegraphic service he begged me to do nothing before his arrival and stated that he was leaving for Moscow almost immediately. This spectacle of a man racing almost a thousand miles on the chance of purchasing a second-hand Ford at an exorbitant price is sufficiently impressive. On the eighth of October, accompanied by a friend who was also from Rostov and also interested in

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automobiles, he came to my room in the Grand Hotel. This first meeting, however, was purely social. The conversation centered primarily on the nature of the celebration with which the actual sale of the car would be solemnized. A business engagement was made for the following morning.

At this second meeting the prospective purchaser placed his case before me. He said that he owned a small restaurant in Rostov, that he was being driven out of business by the heavy taxes imposed by the state, that he had a wife, a mother, and a couple of sisters to support, that he had taken a genuine liking to me from the first, that he was interested in going into the taxi business, and that my automobile was precisely what he needed to keep the wolf from the door. I replied that what he said moved me greatly and that I would therefore put the car in perfect condition and equip it with new tires throughout for the price which he had suggested in Rostov. And then I added that I would include the new parts which had just arrived from America and which a mechanic had told me were almost priceless. After some sparring back and forth, however, he told me that this amount was more than he would pay and that he could buy a car in Moscow for much less. With this he departed promising to return in a few days and take me for a ride through the city

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in the automobile which he expected to purchase.

It was at this point that my education regarding the sale of automobiles in the Soviet Union began in real earnest. As yet I had given practically no thought to the question. I had assumed that the transaction could be handled quickly and expeditiously by the parties directly concerned. I now began to make inquiries among friends in educational institutions and persons engaged in the automobile trade in Moscow regarding the proper procedure to follow in disposing of the car. Although the reports were conflicting, I soon discovered that difficulties lay ahead of me. I learned that the sale of an automobile in Soviet Russia is a matter of public interest. Not only must the sale be duly registered, but the conditions of the sale are supposedly determined by the appropriate governmental organ. If the owner of an automobile wishes to sell, he must first take the car to the Department of Automobile Transport and have it appraised by an expert. The theory of course is that the value thus placed upon the car will be the actual price of sale. Moreover, the purchaser of a machine must receive a permit from this same authority. The desired permit is of course sometimes refused. Furthermore, I soon found that the disposal of my car would be attended by more than the ordinary difficulties because it was owned

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by a citizen of another country. A chauffeur first directed my attention to a statement in my automobile passport which declared that the car was subject to neither sale nor exchange. This meant that a special permit would have to be received from the Ministry of Trade under whose auspices the car had been brought into the Union.

Here I should say a few words regarding the procedures which are actually followed in the sale of automobiles. Because of the great scarcity of cars and the relative abundance of rubles in the country, the effort on the part of the government to fix prices is certainly thwarted in many instances. In the first place, cars may be exchanged much more easily than they may be sold outright. As a consequence the owner of an excellent car may escape the price-fixing authority by trading his car for a Ford of, let us say, the 1915 model. In this case the real transaction, which takes place in rubles, is unrecorded. In the second place, the experts representing the Department of Automobile Transport are apparently human and therefore subject to temptation. A man who had just sold his car told me that normally the value placed upon it would have been 2500 rubles, but that the power of friendship within the Department had been sufficient to raise the appraisal to 4500 rubles. In the third place, the actual terms of sale

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may escape the record. The purchaser may in fact pay 5000 rubles for a car when, according to the permit, it is to be sold for 2500 rubles. In the instance mentioned above the car was finally sold, not for 4500, but for 6500 rubles. Thus in devious ways economic forces seek expression.

When the fact became known in interested circles that my car was for sale, inquiries began to come in from many quarters. A half dozen institutions approached me and endeavored to show me how their work would be handicapped if I did not sell the car to them. Then on Sunday, October 13, the two men from Rostov reappeared. The restaurant owner said that he had purchased a car and that he was consequently no longer interested in the Ford. But since he did not invite me to the promised ride about the city, I had my doubts. Nevertheless the other man played the active rôle. He said that he represented the Geological Survey Station of the Don Basin and that this organization needed the automobile badly. He pointed out, moreover, that he had already been put to considerable expense in coming to Moscow, that I was consequently under some obligation to him, that the institutions in the capital city could purchase cars from abroad, and that I should therefore befriend the provinces and sell the machine to him. I then recited all the difficulties which seemed to

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surround the sale of my car and asked him if the organization which he represented was sufficiently influential to secure the necessary permits. He gave a smile of complete assurance and replied that there would be no difficulty on that score. In order to test him further I stated that I intended sooner or later to give to the press a full and detailed account of the entire transaction. To this he said that he and his organization would not have the slightest objection. We then agreed on a sales price of 4750 rubles and drew up articles of understanding. I was to have the car put in first-class condition in every respect, including new tires and spare parts; he was to secure the necessary permits and come for the car as soon as it was in order.

During the course of these negotiations two other men came to my room bent on purchasing the car. When I told them that I had about concluded an agreement with the representatives from Rostov, they suggested that the situation was just right for the organization of socialistic competition and that the car should go to the highest bidder. When I asked them what institution they represented the spokesman replied with a smile that they were from the State Bank. He appeared to be a man of considerable self-assurance and talked at length on the purchase and sale of auto-

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mobiles in Soviet Russia. Moreover, if his word could be relied upon, he was undoubtedly an authority in this department of human knowledge: he boasted that he had already arranged the sale of thirty-six cars. He then examined my documents and said that he knew precisely how the case should be handled. After a further lecture or two on his chosen field he and his companion left to have a look at the automobile. As soon as they were gone my friend from the south cautioned me to beware of them on the grounds that they were undoubtedly commission men. And as he in his turn took his departure I wondered just whom he represented and for what purposes he wanted the car. However, I thought it would be just as well to wait and see whether he could fulfill his side of the agreement.

In the course of two weeks the car was put in order and I telegraphed Rostov. Five days passed without a reply. Then I received a telegram stating that the documents were being prepared and that everything would soon be ready. Again there was a period of waiting. On the first day of November another telegram reached me reporting that the scene of preparing the documents had been transferred to Kharkov. And again there was a long silence. On the ninth of November I telegraphed an ultimatum in which I gave the

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prospective purchasers of the car but two days of grace. At once I received a reply stating that they would arrive in Moscow on the 14th, presumably with all the necessary documents. The 12th brought a very ambiguous telegram which caused me to doubt their ability to put the transaction through. Nevertheless I waited until the 14th. The day came and went with no word from either Kharkov or Rostov.

In the meantime certain other parties became greatly interested in the purchase of the Ford. On the 10th of November a representative of the Commissariat of Education called on me and said that he needed the car for the purpose of carrying certain educational exhibits to the villages. The proposition appealed to me strongly and I resolved to sell the machine to him if he should make me a reasonable proposition. Two days later, through a third party, he offered me 2500 rubles for the car. Since this would reduce my loss to approximately 500 rubles and since the cause itself interested me, I decided to accept the offer. But before I could get in touch with him another proposal appeared above the horizon.

On the morning of the 14th of November a representative of Avtodor, a powerful co-operative organization for the promotion of automobile transport, telephoned me that his institution

AND WHAT BECAME OF THE FORD

needed the car unto death and implored me to see him at once. Since this looked quite serious, I replied that I would await his coming. He arrived immediately and then outlined a project much like that which had come from the Commissariat of Education. He said that representatives of Avtodor were interested in improving the highways, that they were preparing films designed to convert the peasants to the idea of better roads, and that my car was precisely what they required to carry these films into the villages. He told me, moreover, that they were ready to pay me as much as the car had cost me. Since this man had supervised the repairing of the car in the Lomonosov Institute and since service in the improvement of the Russian highways seemed such an entirely appropriate disposition of the Ford, I told him that he could have it for 2500 rubles. This seemed to please him beyond measure; and in the course of a few days the various permits were secured, the transaction was consummated, and the car once more started out upon the village roads. And today, as I write these lines, I trust that it is serving as an instrument in shortening those vast distances which have retarded the economic and cultural development of the Russian peasant.

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